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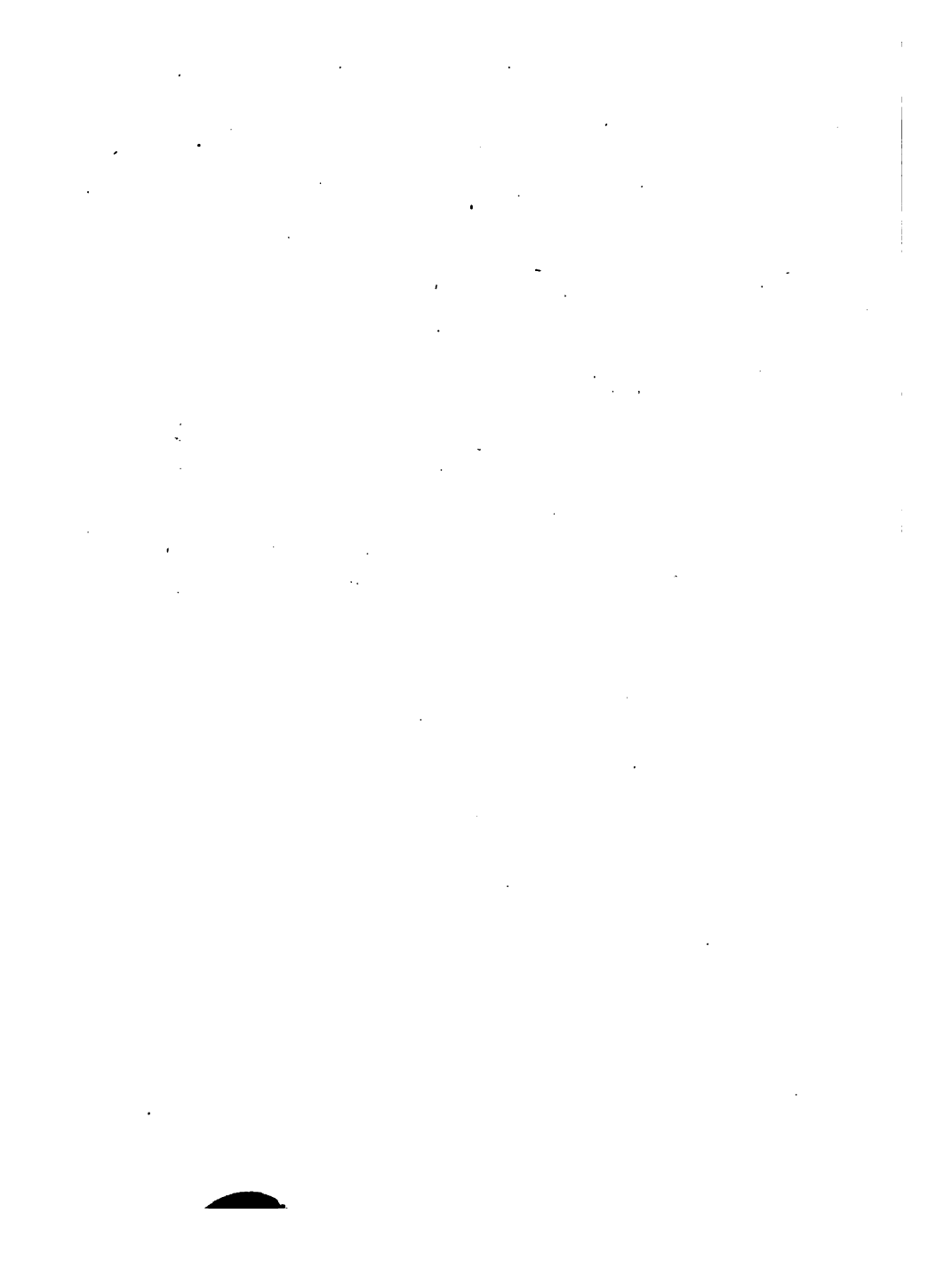




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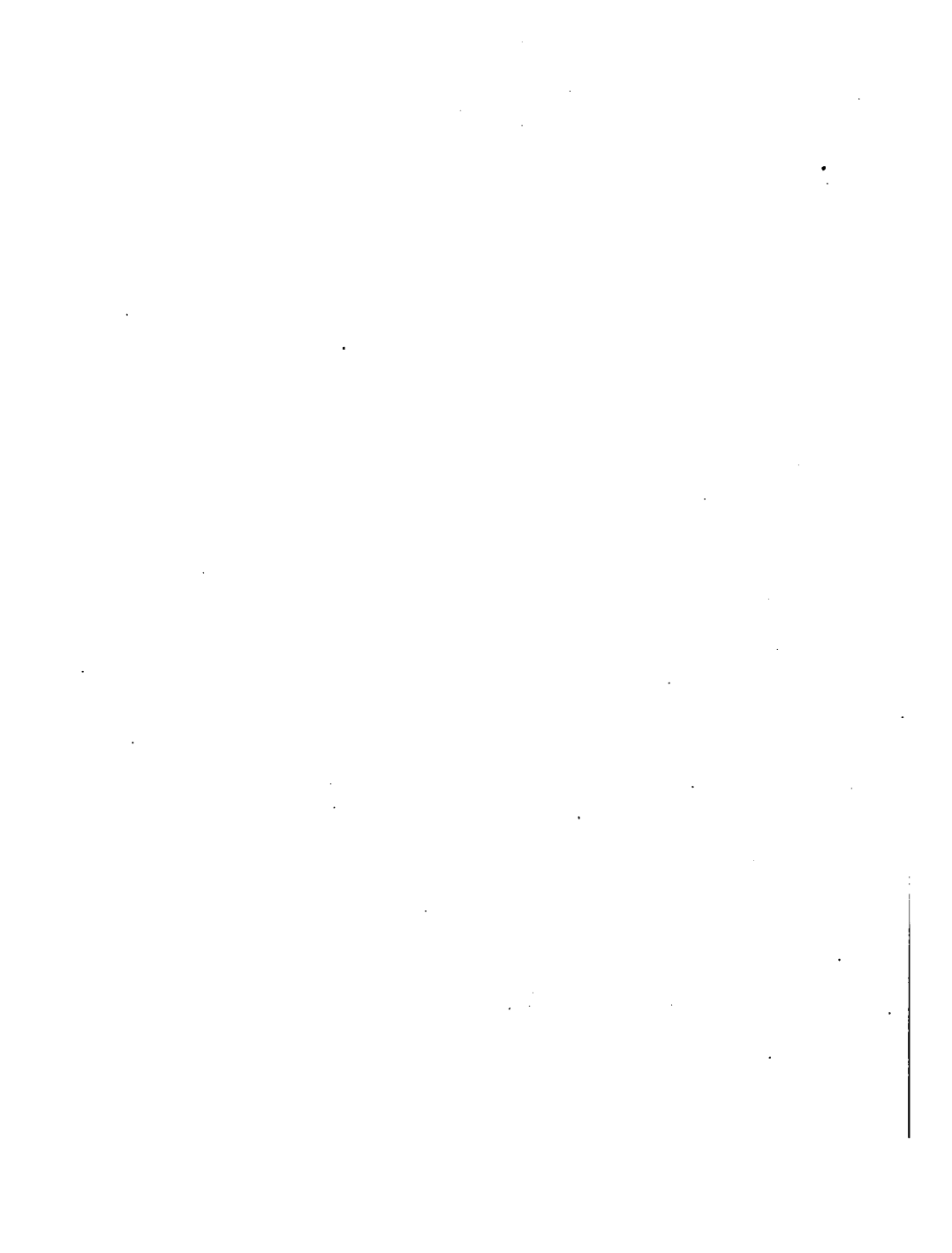






THE
CHILDREN'S GARDEN.

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GATHERING THE CHERRIES.

See page 90.

THE
CHILDREN'S GARDEN

AND

What they Made of it.

BY

AGNES AND MARIA E. CATLOW

AUTHORS OF

'SKETCHING RAMBLES,' 'POPULAR CONCHOLOGY,' 'POPULAR ENTOMOLOGY,'
ETC. ETC.

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THIS LITTLE WORK
Is Dedicated
BY THE
QUEEN'S GRACIOUS PERMISSION
TO
HER ROYAL HIGHNESS
THE
PRINCESS BEATRICE.

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THE CHILDREN'S GARDEN

AND

WHAT THEY MADE OF IT.



CHAPTER I.

JANUARY.

New-Year's Day in London—The Children introduced—A Mystery—Papa's Return—Guessing the Riddle—Its Solution—The Country-house at Sunnyside—The Children's Garden.

IT was New-Year's Day, and Mrs. Hamilton and her children were enjoying the warmth of a blazing fire in a pretty London drawing-room. It was that happy time called blind-man's-holiday; the

shutters were closed, the curtains drawn, and an early tea stood waiting on the table, for Mr. Hamilton was expected home from a long journey, and nothing could be so pleasant as that social and refreshing meal after a cold drive, with snow on the ground in the country, and the yellowest of fogs in town.

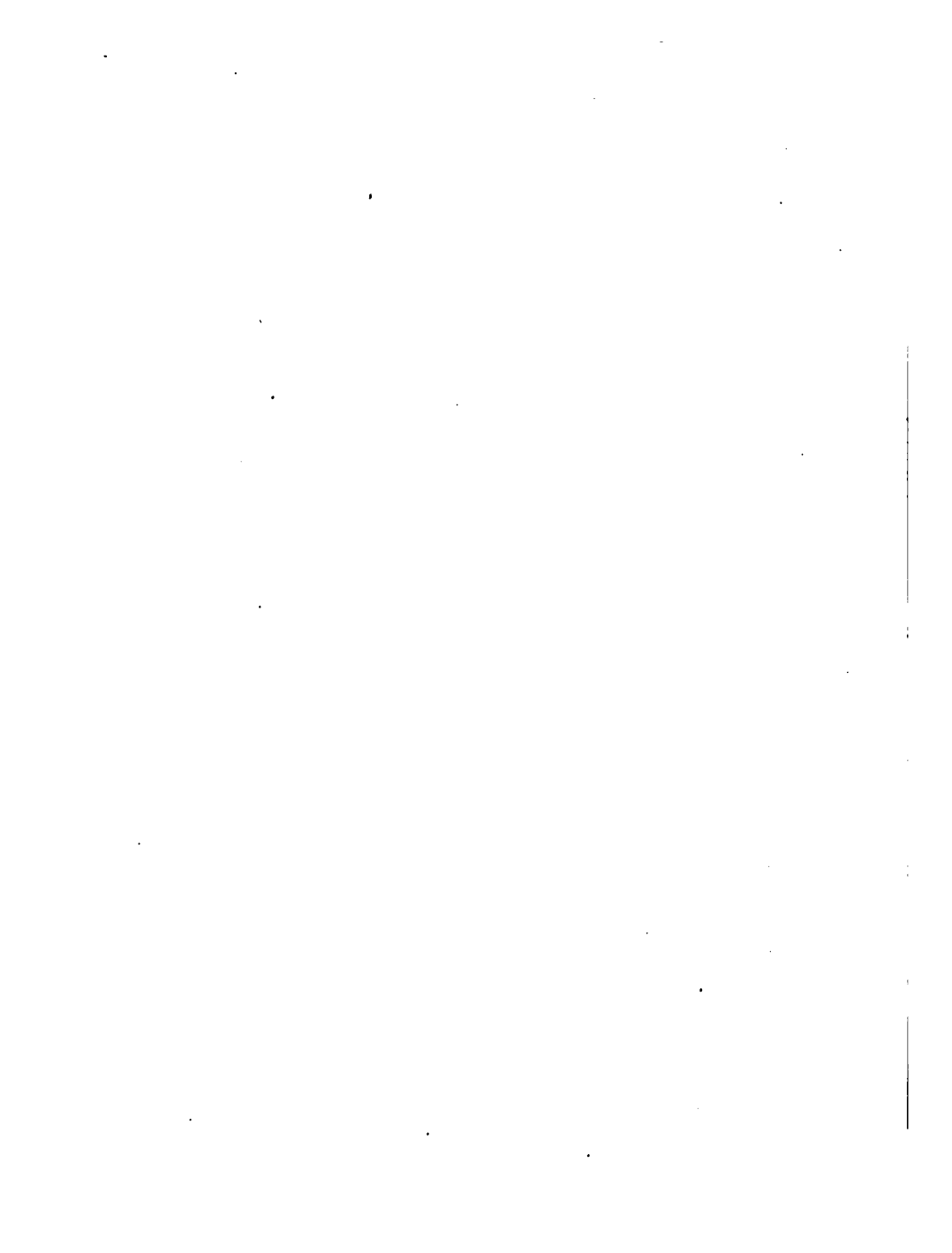
There had been a slight mystery observed too about papa's journey, which greatly stimulated their curiosity—for, generally, everything was open as the day between the parents and children; but as they had been forbidden to ask any questions on the subject, their wonder expressed itself in various conjectures amongst themselves, that had greatly entertained their mother.

'I wonder,' said Herbert, the eldest boy, 'whether papa is gone to find a new school for us, Harry; you know he said we were too old now for a lady to teach.'

'I should think so, Herby; why, you are ten, and I am eight, and I have heard papa say that we boys take up too much of mamma's time, now little Katie has lessons too.'

'Yes,' said Herbert; 'and uncle laughed and said she ought to set up a cane, but papa told him pretty quickly that if his boys would not do right without a cane, he should be ashamed of them. I think it is that women don't know Latin enough, and those kind of things that men must learn.'

'Ah, that's it, I dare say,' returned Harry, 'but they know many things that are better than Latin;





WARMING PAPA'S SLIPPERS.

See page 11.

why, mamma knows everything, I do believe, and Latin too, for I heard her telling Mary the names of some flowers the other day, and if they were not Latin they were very like it. Well, we shan't go anywhere for a month, so there's all January for fun—thirty-one days; what a good thing it's one of the long months! But I wish papa would make haste; I want my tea.'

'Not more than papa must!' exclaimed Mary. 'Why, he has been out all day down in Surrey, mamma says; he must want his tea more than you;' and the thoughtful girl of twelve went to the tea-table again to see that all was right, and papa's arm-chair in the exact spot she knew was his favourite. Little six-year-old Katie, always called Roly-Poly by her brothers on account of her plumpness and softness of outline, sat scorching her face, and burning her dimpled hands, in order to toast still more papa's slippers, which were already giving out a strong odour of burnt wool.

'I think papa is gone to buy us New-Year's gifts,' she at last said very gravely, drawing a little back as she spoke, for the heat was too much even for her self-devotion, and the slippers were almost red-hot, Harry told her.

'Why, you little goose Roly, what should papa be out all day for, to buy presents? The bazaar is not so far off, and I'm sure I could spend five pounds there in five minutes, if I had them, which I don't think I ever shall, you know.'

'I believe Katie is not far wrong,' said Mrs. Hamilton; 'but hark! there is the carriage—;' the rest of the sentence was drowned in the hurrahs of the boys, while Mary opened the tea-caddy, that not a moment might be lost when the urn came, and little Katie seized the unfortunate slippers again, for fear they had grown cold while she spoke; and be it recorded to her honour that she maintained her post, in spite of her ardent desire to follow her brothers into the hall.

'Well, children, you had better keep at a distance,' said Mr. Hamilton, 'for I am too cold to touch, in spite of all my wraps. How cosy it looks!' he added, entering that now well-lighted room; for Mary had lit the candles, though the lamp was rather beyond her power. 'And now for my slippers—why, little woman, they quite burn my toes, but they are all the more comfortable;' and, bending down, he kissed the happy little red face, that could now cool itself with a safe conscience. Tea was soon ready, and, seasoned by the lively chatter of the children, proved most welcome to the tired traveller. Nothing was said about papa's mysterious absence, unless a nod and smile of peculiar significance in answer to his wife's 'Well, have you succeeded?' might have some connection with it. When tea was over, the children expected to be dismissed for the night, as Katie's nurse had already made her appearance; but, instead of the usual proceeding, papa took the little one on his knee, drew closer to the fire, and while the boys

threw themselves on the rug, and quiet Mary placed herself as usual on her mamma's foot-stool, he said, 'Now, Herbert, what do you think I have been about to-day?'

'Harry and I thought you were gone to find a boys' school for us, papa.'

'Only half right. And Mary, what does she say?'

'I cannot think, papa; because if you had gone to see auntie and cousins, you would have told us, and nobody else lives in Surrey that we know, so I give it up, papa.'

'I thought you had gone to buy pretty presents, as you always do on New-Year's Day,' said Katie.

'And a very good guess too, my little girl,' answered Mr. Hamilton; 'it was just that; but I have only bought *one* present for you all, mamma included, so you must put your wise heads together, and find out what it can be.'

'Is it in the carriage?' asked Mary.

'No, it was too large to bring,' answered papa, laughing. 'Mind, I only give you each one guess, for I have a great deal to tell you before you go to bed, and Katie would be asleep.'

'Oh, I know; it is a new piano, papa!' exclaimed Mary; 'for you said we wanted one now I can play duets with mamma.'

'No,' interrupted Harry, 'that can't be; for as I don't play, and never shall, it would not be for all, do you see.'

'But you hear the music,' persisted Mary, 'and like it too.'

'Yes, but that is not it, I can tell by papa's face. I think it is a boat; rowing is such charming fun, and Herby and I could row you anywhere.'

'What, up and down the streets of London, or in the square garden, with perhaps the nursery as a refuge on stormy days!' At this sally from papa, there were shouts of laughter at Harry's expense, in which he soon joined with great good temper, and threw his boat overboard, as he said, with another blunder in nautical affairs that redoubled the merry peals.

'Now, Master Herbert, what wise conjecture can you make, the two first being doubtful?'

'It is rather puzzling, papa, to find one thing that will suit us all. Oh, I know,' he said, after a moment's thought; 'it is books, perhaps a whole library; that would suit us all nicely, and be too large for you to bring in the carriage.'

'Now, Katie, the last and least, what have you to say?'

'Is it a pony, papa—a dear little white pony, for mamma and all of us to ride?' putting up her rosy mouth to kiss her thanks beforehand for she knew not what, but thinking, with child-like faith, it must be something good from papa.

'All wrong, and yet all right,' said Mr. Hamilton, 'for my present may perhaps include all four guesses.'

This threw the children into a still greater per-

plexity, and they guessed wildly and at random, till mamma suggested that it was growing very late, and that Katie was almost asleep.

'Well then, what do you think of a country-house, with drawing-room for your new piano, Mary; a library for Herbert's books; a pond for Harry's boat, not large enough to drown him or those he undertakes to row; and a field for Roly's white pony?'

'Oh, papa!' cried all the children, breathless with delight, 'is it really true?'

'Yes, really true,' was the answer; 'the Manor House in the village of Sunnyside is really ours.'

'And is there a garden, papa?'

'A large one, including pleasure and kitchen garden, a green-house and conservatory; and in one part, some little distance from the house, I fixed on a small piece of ground that I mean to make over to you children, to cultivate entirely yourselves, with the occasional help of the gardener to do what is beyond your present strength and experience.'

'Oh, how charming! how happy we shall be!' cried the children.

'But, papa,' said Herbert, 'we, that is Harry and I, shall be at school, and can only work in the holidays.'

'I did not mean to tell you all the good news at once, Herby, but perhaps I might as well. You are not going to school again at present; you will attend some hours each day at the clergyman's in the village for your lessons, and I hope the progress you will make with him, and your conduct at home, will

induce me to continue this plan till you are both old enough for a public school.'

Again the children shouted with delight, awakening little Katie, who, during the discussion, had dropped asleep; so she was dismissed to bed. And when the elders had talked a little longer. they followed their sister to rest in high spirits.



CHAPTER II.

FEBRUARY.

Town Amusements—Blind-man's-Holiday—Mary's Love for Flowers—Herbert the Naturalist—Harry's joyous Anticipations, and happy Katie—Buying Garden-tools—The Journey down—The Arrival at the Manor House—The next Morning—First Sight of the Children's Garden—A little Talk about it—The Building of Summer and Tool House suggested—Mr. Shaving introduced—Grand Talk about Building—Mary and Gardener consult together—The Domain examined—A Rockery discovered—Who is the new Tutor?—The Holiday extended—The Buildings commenced and finished.

FEBRUARY came, and the time approached for the removal to the country, as Mr. Hamilton, being anxious to superintend some extensive alterations in the grounds of the Manor House, had determined to leave town in the middle of that month. The children, whose curiosity and interest knew no bounds, were in a state of blissful expectation, which

somewhat dimmed the usual round of winter amusements; juvenile parties, and even the pantomime, though greatly enjoyed at the time, did not fill their thoughts as in former years, when the play-room was in an uproar for days after, with clumsy representations of the tricks of clown and pantaloon, or imitations of the graceful dance of harlequin and columbine, that would not have flattered the self-love of those nimble personages. Blind-man's-holiday was an hour looked forward to with even more delight than usual, for then the children were allowed to ask any amount of questions about the number of rooms, their size and shape; which was to be the play-room, the nursery, the boys' bedroom, and Mary's, for she was to be promoted to the dignity of a room of her own, and only little Katie left to the charge of their good old nurse. But after all, the garden was the great charm to the town-bred children, for they had always been encouraged in a preference for simple pleasures. Mary's love for flowers was well known in the family; and Herbert was already a juvenile naturalist, an insatiable reader of books on that subject, and a collector in a small way of natural objects, whenever a visit to the country gave him a chance of indulging his taste. To these two the thought of living amid woods and fields was ecstasy, and to have a garden of their own the summit of earthly happiness. The lively Harry rejoiced in the prospect of a larger field for his rambling and romping propensities; active and full of health,

he anticipated joyous scampers in the grounds, and digging in his own garden, as the most delightful of sports; unless when certain visions of rowing a real boat, or riding a real white pony, crossed his mind, when recalling his papa's words on the first evening the happy news was told them. Katie was always happy when her friends were, and the little demure thing warmed papa's slippers every evening, and thought while receiving his kisses that both town and country were equally charming.

One day they were all told to prepare for a walk with papa, and he took them to a shop in Oxford Street, where gardening tools of all kinds were to be found. There, each was provided with a spade of suitable size and weight, a rake to match, one hoe and trowel common to all four, and at their earnest request each a watering-pot; all agreeing that the tiny one allotted to Katie was almost too pretty to use, but would do for the tiniest flowers, and it had a very long spout, that the little gardener might stand less chance of watering her frock instead of the plants. A light roller was then purchased sufficiently heavy to be useful, but not beyond the united efforts of the two boys.

At last the happy day came, though the children had found the time interminable, Harry thinking now that January might as well have been a short month. The carriage was at the door, the boys climbed into the rumble, papa, mamma, and the girls took their places, and they set off. It was with

difficulty that Harry could be restrained from venting his exuberant spirits in a wild hurrah, as older boys do on the road from school; but Herbert told him that would not do in Grosvenor Square, and that he must wait till they saw the Manor House.

Oh the delights of that journey, cold as it was! True, the sun shone, and when they left London a hoar frost glittered like diamonds on every tree, so that nature looked beautiful in spite of the season. After ten or twelve miles, Harry thought every far-off house must be their new one, though they had more than double that distance to go, and were to stop half-way to rest the horses, dine, and warm themselves. At last they reached the pretty village of Sunnyside, passed the old church, and the Rectory, which the boys looked at with interest and respect; and seeing an old gentleman in spectacles at the window, they instantly set him down as their future master, and were rather awed by his learned appearance. Soon after the carriage stopped at the rustic lodge of the Manor House; the gates were opened by a smiling young woman, who curtsied a welcome to her new master and his family, and a short avenue of beech-trees brought them to the door. The house was spacious, but old-fashioned and many-gabled, half covered with creepers now leafless.

'Welcome to the Manor House,' said Mr. Hamilton as they entered the large hall; 'I hope we shall all be very happy here.'

'I am sure we shall, papa,' was the pith of the four

answers, though expressed in various ways; the favourite word 'jolly' being conspicuous from Harry's voice, for the small schoolboy thought it manly to use schoolboy's expressions. They were all over the house in no time, and almost too much delighted with the numerous pretty rooms to obey the summons to an early tea; after which the darkness of the winter's day stopped any more exploring, and the children went to bed early to dream of the garden, and awake at peep of day to the odd sensation of finding themselves in a new and strange place. After breakfast mamma took the children all over the house, pointed out the pretty view from the drawing-room window, an opening in the trees showing lovely blue hills in the distance; the dining-room view was down the avenue, where the trees meeting overhead looked like the nave of a Gothic church. Mary was particularly pleased with the breakfast-room, which was also to be her study, where her morning lessons were to be continued with mamma, and the little Katie was to be initiated into the early mysteries of the same. There stood the old piano, and a sudden idea striking her, she ran into the drawing-room, and found a grand new instrument, which the view from the window had made her overlook; perhaps as *her* guess had come true, the rest might—who knows? But papa's voice was heard, and they had only waited his leisure to see the garden; hats and cloaks were on in a moment, as he entered, saying,

'Now, children, who is for the garden? First

you must look at the large one, belonging to your mamma and myself, and in which we shall always be glad to see you when happy and good. You see how extensive it is, and you shall hear all about the improvements and alterations I mean to make. But you want to see your own domain, the piece I gave you as a new-year's gift. Come, Harry, keep with us down this path; now, past the coach-house and that shabby bit of paling, and here you are in your garden.'

'What, all this large piece, papa!' exclaimed the children together. 'Oh! how kind of you! And is this for our very own, and may we do what we like with it?'

'Yes, you may; but I hope to see what capital gardeners you will make in time. At present it is but a wilderness, and has evidently only been used by the former proprietors as an addition to the fruit-garden. I will have all the middle cleared away, and then leave you to your own devices, giving you any help required in the way of hard work; but I want my children to be strong and active, and to take pleasure in rural pursuits, and I think a garden will bring all these advantages.'

'Oh papa, I never was so happy in my life,' cried Herbert, 'for there must be all sorts of insects and birds here in the summer.'

'Yes,' said Mary, 'and only think of the flowers.'

'But,' interrupted Harry, 'the fun will be the digging and rolling and hard work; I shall like that best, except climbing the trees.'

‘I must point out to you the capabilities and advantages of your ground,’ said papa. ‘Here on the north you have the high wall of the coach-house; this will shelter you from cold winds, and give you a narrow border for delicate plants; and fortunately here are two good pear-trees planted already.’

‘What, papa!’ exclaimed Mary, ‘shall we have two fruit-trees?’

‘Hurrah!’ cried Harry, ‘I never thought of that. Why, Mary, we shall have fruit feasts, and I can be gatherer.’

‘You will not only have pears, Harry, but apples and cherries; for look, here are two cherry-trees by the old palings, on the east, and three apple-trees on the west. I think you are most fortunate to find these ready grown, and probably of good kinds.’

‘How charming to invite mamma and papa to eat fruit with us in our own garden! but then we must have a table and chairs,’ said the thoughtful Mary.

‘Why not build an arbour or summer-house?’ Mrs. Hamilton suggested. The children screamed with delight at the novel idea of building a house, though it were only a wooden one. Papa told them that on the east side against the old paling facing the west, would be a capital spot; it would there be neither too hot nor too cold to be agreeable. This then was the first thing arranged, and already the children fancied themselves sitting there, inviting their friends to partake of cherries.

‘Where will you keep all the pretty garden-tools

that we bought in town?' papa continued; 'they must not lie about, but be put away neatly.'

'I shall carry mine into the nursery,' cried Katie.

'No, dear, it would not do to dirty Nurse's nice floor; Katie would not like to give Nurse trouble.'

Herbert thought that if they could build a summer-house, they might also build a tool-house. This was pronounced a capital idea by Harry, who already looked upon himself as an architect and builder. Papa approving, now pointed out a spot in the south-west corner that would be out of sight; and thus the second plan was decided upon.

'But when may we begin, papa? I long to work in real earnest, like a carpenter first, and then like a gardener,' said Harry.

'Well, my boy, you shall have Mr. Shaving to-morrow to receive your orders, and to advise with you about the two buildings. Suppose you boys undertake the arrangement of this part of your plan, whilst your sister consults Gardener about the laying out of your ground. He will advise you about soil, and the aspect that will best suit the different plants you wish to grow.'

Mary expressed a hope that she might always have flowers enough for mamma's table, and Katie, standing up for nurse's rights, thought she ought to have a nosegay as well. The pleasure of growing their own flowers seemed to them to be the height of happiness, and they could talk of nothing else all day but their garden, and what it was to produce.

Mr. Shaving making his appearance next morning, was taken by the boys to their charming spot of ground. When the place papa had recommended for the arbour was pointed out to him, he first put on a very grave, thoughtful air, then examined the old palings to find out whether they were sufficiently strong; and then the aspect was considered, and finding that it would look west and south, he nodded his head and said :

‘Well, young gentlemen, this is a famous spot for spring and autumn, though I fancy it a little too hot for July and August; but then, to be sure, you can have seats in other parts of your garden, so at any rate we will fix the summer-house here. Well, we must consider first the size; how many do you want it to hold at once?’

‘Oh,’ cried Harry, ‘it must hold all us four children.’

‘And papa and mamma too,’ added Herbert; ‘and we must have a table in the middle, and seats all round.’

‘Very well, sir; now I see my way a little, and a careful measurement will soon give me a notion of my work. Your papa tells me I am to do all the heavy work, and you are to learn to do the lighter, such as nailing the laths and trellis-work.’

‘But we should like to see how you do the other part also,’ said Herbert.

‘To be sure you shall, and welcome. You speak also of a tool-house to be built; where should that be placed?’

‘Here, we think, as the shrubbery will hide it.’

‘Well, but we need not make it an ugly building ; and as this spot faces north and east, you might have it so conveniently arranged, and seats placed, as to make it a pleasant spot in the hot weather. Here you would be sheltered from the south-west sun.’

‘Why, Mr. Shaving,’ cried Harry, ‘what a clever man you are, to think of all these things ! Pray set to work at once ; we are so impatient.’

‘I dare say you are, sir ; but I shall have to cut the uprights and cross-beams, prepare the flooring, and many other things. I’ll set about it at once, now I know what is wanted. But if you are to help, young gentlemen, you must have a hammer or two ; mine will be too heavy for your strength, and besides I shall want to use it as well.’

‘Oh, we will ask papa,’ said Harry ; and they were soon at the neighbouring village laying in a stock of tools necessary for their carpenter’s work, and which would also be useful afterwards in many ways for the garden.

After they were gone, Mary brought the gardener to the spot, to consult him how it could be laid out to the best advantage. He highly approved of the wall, sheltering the garden from the north ; and the pear-trees, he said, when well pruned and trained, would not only be useful, but ornamental. He suggested that under these a good broad border might be made for delicate shrubs and evergreens, as it would be sheltered from the north winds, and they would hide the wall both summer and winter ; and

‘you know, miss, to take off the sombre appearance, we can have flowering bulbs in advance of them in spring, and Geraniums in summer.’ This idea was very pleasing to the young gardener; but when she turned to the east, and saw the ugly paling looking shabby, though too good to remove, she was puzzled, and asked Gardener his opinion.

‘Why, miss, I hear the young gentlemen are to build a summer-house in the middle of this side, and that will hide some of it; then close against the other parts we can plant Virginian creeper and Ivy pretty thickly, which in a year or two will cover it entirely, and for this season, Sweet peas and Nasturtiums will do; in front we will have shrubs, both evergreen and deciduous.’

‘What are deciduous shrubs, Gardener?’

‘Those that lose their leaves in autumn, such as Lilacs, Deutzias, and others; the evergreens change theirs in spring and summer only, and never lose them entirely, which makes them so very valuable in winter. Then, if these are placed far back, which will be all the better, there will still be a place for flowering plants in front.’

The west side puzzled them not a little; it could boast of three apple-trees only, and a few old Lilacs and Laburnums dividing the garden from the farm-yard. At last the gardener said,

‘I think, miss, the best plan will be to make this a good thick shrubbery, with an undulating line forming the border, or we shall have too many straight lines.

But what do you intend to have in the middle of the garden? the space is sufficiently large to be made very pretty.'

All Mary could suggest was, that she wanted as many beds as possible for cultivating flowers.

'Very well; there is plenty of room for beds of all sizes and shapes. I do not advise a lawn, because it would take up too much room, and gravel is drier for children. In a small garden a geometric plan is a good one, as it looks very gay and is capable of much variety.'

Mary asked Gardener to explain what he meant.

'Why, miss, you must ask your papa to draw you a plan for that, either oblong or oval, something like this;' and he drew a slight sketch on the ground. 'If this were placed opposite the arbour, it might be bright with low flowering plants all the summer. Beyond that there would still be a considerable space, and as you will like as many paths for walking on as possible, I think this might be divided into a few larger beds, with waving lines, in contrast with the more formal plan; these may have taller plants than the geometric beds, such as flowering shrubs, Roses, and other attractive things, and you might always have your garden a blaze of beauty. The south side is open and might be turfed, which would give you a little lawn.'

'What a delightful plan! Thank you, Gardener; now I will consult papa and my brothers, and then ask you how to set about this pleasant work. Come,

Katie dear; what are you doing in that corner? what a heap of large stones and rubbish!

'Why, miss,' said Gardener, 'that corner, which I had thought of filling up with a group of evergreens, would make a capital spot for a rockery, with the addition of plenty of good earth; this would afford you much amusement, as you might procure early Primroses from the lanes, and with Ferns and other roots make really a pretty spot of an unsightly one.'

'Oh, that would quite complete the beauty of our garden! Now I must run and tell papa all you have said; I am sure he will approve, and help me about the shape of the geometric beds and the waving lines, and all the other difficulties.'

A few mornings after, at breakfast, Herbert ventured to ask a question that had been frequently discussed between himself and Harry since their arrival. 'Papa, when are we to begin our studies at the Rectory?'

'Are you very anxious about it?' said papa.

'No, not at all; at least I am not,' cried Harry, turning very red, 'particularly since I have seen the clergyman.'

'What do you mean, you silly boy?' said Mary, who sat next to her brother.

'Why,' he replied, 'Herbert and I saw an old gentleman at the Rectory window when we came, with white hair and spectacles, and we thought he looked rather cross, and that's the truth; and as you

said, papa, we were to go to the Rectory for lessons, I have been thinking about him ever since.'

Mr. Hamilton put on his funny look, as Harry called it; but repressing a strong inclination to laugh, he said, 'I think you will like that old gentleman very much, my boy, and you will find that there will be no cause to fear him; he called upon us yesterday when you were in your garden, and we think he will be a kind neighbour, as well as a good clergyman. However, you will both have time to become acquainted with Mr. Gordon and with some other friends, before you begin lessons; for I mean to give you the month of March to yourselves, with the exception of a little daily reading. You will, by the beginning of April, have everything in tolerable order, the summer and tool houses will be built, your garden planned, and I think the time will not be lost, as your bodily health requires attention, as well as your mental culture, and outdoor exercise will be very good for you. Your ruddy cheeks, master Harry, need only keeping up, but we want to make Herbert's more like them.'

It required all Harry's good breeding to restrain his impatience during this long speech, and as soon as it was over, he danced round the room with delight, at the unexpected addition to their already long holiday, till the ruddy cheeks were rosier than ever, and he was fairly out of breath. At that moment Mr. Shaving was announced, and the boys hastened to join him, and continue their new work.

‘Well, young gentlemen, you see, as we put in the uprights yesterday, and the solid back to hide the old palings, I think I can be preparing the roof, which must also be close to keep all dry, whilst you nail on the laths to form the open lattice-work at the sides. I will show you how to do it, and then you can go on; you see the sides are boarded up about half-way, to make the whole strong and more compact, so the lattice must go from these boards up to the cross-bar that will support the roof. Now, Master Herbert, do you mount the steps and take one end of this lath, and Master Harry can help to hold it steady and hand you the nails; then you can change about, you know. Would you like the lattice straight or cross-barred.’

‘Which is the best?’ asked Herbert.

‘Why, sir, that depends on taste, but I prefer the cross-bars.’

‘Very well, then let it be so,’ said Harry; ‘at any rate we can do a bit, and then call Mary to look.’

‘Very good, sir; then begin, and nail the lath to the top, but you must fix what the slope is to be beforehand. Suppose I make a mark top and bottom for two or three, and then your eye must guide you for the rest.’

The boys worked merrily on, making some mistakes of course, but they were easily rectified.

Mary approved the sloping lines when appealed to; in the course of a day or two, this part was done, and the roof was completed by Mr. Shaving, who

had also finished the front in an ornamental manner that delighted the young builders.

'What about the floor, Mr. Shaving?' said Mrs. Hamilton, as she looked at the nearly finished building; 'it must be made dry, for the children will sit here very often.'

'Yes, ma'am; the gardener's boy is going to dig away the ground below a foot or more deep, and then the boards will keep quite dry, as the floor will be a little raised.'

'Can we do it?' said Harry.

'Well, it will be rather hard work, sir, but you can do part, and then you can help with the tool-house, where there is quite enough work for some days.'

As the weather proved fine, the two buildings were completed in a fortnight, and painted a dark green; Mr. Shaving also received orders for a rustic table, and benches for the arbour, with shelves and a few drawers for the tool-house, and these were completed before it was weather for the children to sit out of doors much, even in the shelter of their summer-house. And now March was eagerly looked forward to, that they might begin gardening in earnest.



CHAPTER III.

MARCH.

A Collision—A new Friend—The Garden visited—Plans suggested—The Choice—Marking out the Beds—The Gardeners set to work—A Proposal—A new Surprise—An Expedition—Root-Hunting—The Food of Plants—The Rockery arranged—The Garden ready for Planting—A grand Consultation—Choice of Shrubs—Evergreens, Deciduous Shrubs, and Climbers—Proper Time for moving Plants—Several wet Days—A Visit from Mr. Sinclair—Perennials, Biennials, and Annuals—Trees, Shrubs, and Herbaceous Plants—Bedding-out Plants—Bulbs—Choosing Plants for the Geometric Beds, and for the Borders—Planting—The Walks gravelled—The Use of the Roller—Bulbs planted—First Sowing of Seeds.

THE first of March came and proved a fine day without frost; the children determined to devote it to the planning of their beds and borders, as papa had promised them the assistance of the gardener and his men, for as many days as would be necessary for this important business. Whilst Harry was rush-

ing through the hall, to be first on the scene of action, he ran violently against a gentleman just entering the front door, who, laughing at the collision, asked him where he was going in such a hurry.

'I beg your pardon, sir,' said Harry, who although impetuous was never rude; 'I hope I did not hurt you, but I was going to our garden.'

'Then perhaps I may go too,' returned the stranger, shaking hands with Mr. Hamilton, who just then appeared; 'I am very fond of a garden, and like hard work, so probably I can help you.'

Harry looked up, and, the frank good-tempered face gaining his confidence, he said, 'Please do, sir, and here are all the rest.'

The children were then introduced by name to Mr. Sinclair, and much lively conversation followed, as the happy party went through the garden to the particular spot of ground which occupied so much of the thoughts of some among them. The rest of the grounds were first shown to the stranger, whose remarks evinced so much taste, as well as knowledge of the principles of gardening, that, though not understanding all he said, the children felt that they should have a most efficient helper and adviser, if he would assist them; and of his readiness to do this not only his words but his kind looks assured them. Even the little Katie soon put her warm dimpled hand into his, and Harry nearly forgot himself so far as to pronounce him a 'jolly fellow,' but recollecting himself in time, he satisfied his mind by

only thinking it, and scampered off that he might not again be tempted to offend against his mamma's wish that he should use these favourite words more sparingly.

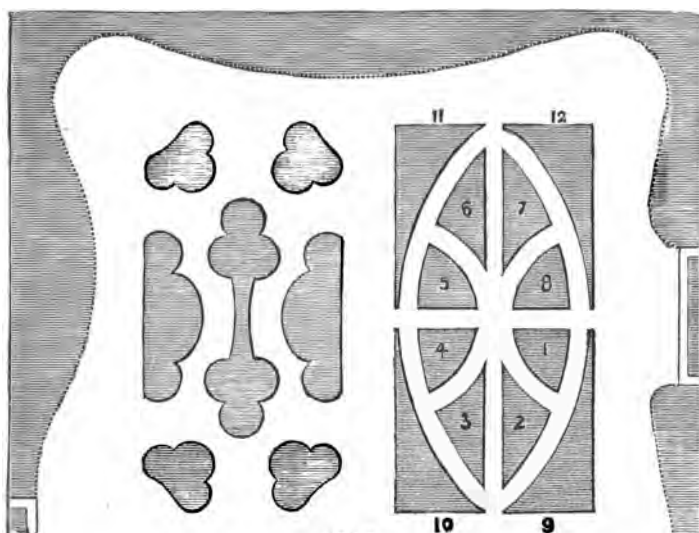
They soon reached the children's garden, and Mary, giving an accurate account of what the gardener had said to her, displayed several different plans, which, with her papa's assistance, she had drawn. Then came a grand consultation as to their various merits and capabilities. On the following leaf are some of the designs, any one of which would have suited their small domain; but at last the unanimous choice of the party fell on No. 1, which had been proved by Mr. Sinclair to possess the greatest number of advantages; then the gardener was called upon to give his opinion, which, after a few trivial alterations in the details, happily coincided with that of the rest of the party. Two men were immediately set to work, under Gardener's directions, to clear away rubbish; afterwards came the amusing part, marking out the beds and gravel walks that were to be, and in this their new friend's correct eye and ready hand proved invaluable. The boys, meantime, were employed in collecting short sticks, which were soon planted thickly round each bed of the geometric plan, as well as all the curves and lines of the border; so that, after two or three hours' work, the design could be so plainly seen, that Mary began to fancy it full of flowers, and little Katie was quite bewildered, and almost lost her way in the maze of paths that were to be gravel walks

in no time. Papa and mamma often visited the happy party, and the former smiled to see the perfect confidence that had been so soon established between his boys and the friend of a few hours; even the somewhat reserved Herbert was perfectly at his ease, and Harry, though evidently held in due check by the firm though kind manner of his new friend, was quite ready to give him a large share of his very warm affections.

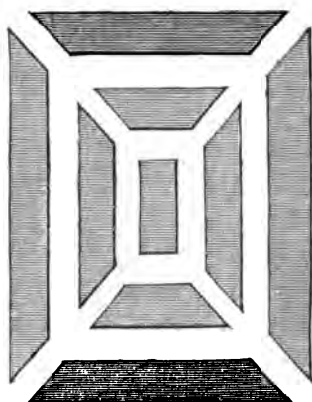
'Now, boys,' said Mr. Sinclair at last, 'there is nothing more to be done till the men have carried out our instructions, prepared the borders, planted the Box round the geometric beds, and pruned the fruit-trees; then the soil must be well looked to; and the planting of shrubs begin. Talking of Box, Miss Hamilton, I think I would advise Thrift and Daisies to be substituted all round the larger border; it will make a variety, and the flowers of both are very pretty.'

'She will like to be called Mary by so kind a friend and helper, I am sure,' said papa, 'and the Thrift is a very good idea in many ways; it will, as you say, make a variety, and as the other part will take a great deal of edging, I fear the Box we have to spare would hardly hold out.'

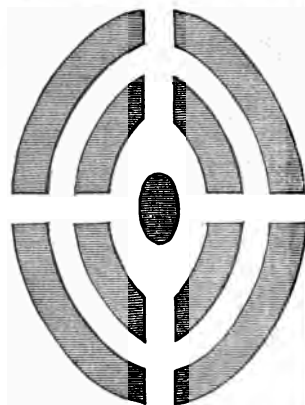
'As you will not be able to do anything in the rest of the garden for a few days, suppose you make an expedition to-morrow, if fine, to procure roots for the rockery,' suggested Mr. Sinclair; 'as I know all the haunts of the Primrose, Cowslip, Violet, and Fern, I offer myself as guide.'



№ 1.



№ 2.



№ 3

‘Oh thank you, thank you,’ cried Harry, ‘but will it be too far for Mary and Roly?’

‘If you will come with me, I will show you how we can manage it, I think,’ said papa; and taking the children, followed by Mr. Sinclair, to the coach-house, he showed them a low basket-carriage that would hold three or four comfortably; and when they had expressed all their delight, and just begun to think that perhaps something to draw this pretty little carriage might be a necessary addition to its usefulness, the stable door was opened, and a beautiful white pony turned its head to see who was coming. This was the crowning joy, and the gentle creature was patted, and little Katie even placed on its back, before they could find voice for anything but words of endearment to the new pet.

‘Will that help you, do you think?’ said papa. ‘If Mary and Katie go in the carriage, with baskets for your treasures, you boys can walk, as you don’t want to go fast, and a man shall lead the pony till we know how far it is to be trusted.’

‘Oh! it is all charming,’ Mary said; ‘thank you so much, dear papa,’ and Katie, as usual, put up her mouth to be kissed, her favourite mode of thanks, and one most people appreciated. Herbert thanked his papa very warmly, and Harry too, though he was more silent than was usual on such occasions; perhaps he was thinking of a certain boat, as surprises never seemed to cease.

The following day proved wet, but the boys went

down to Mr. Shaving's to see how the table and benches got on, and spent a couple of hours very happily in learning the use of the plane and other tools. The day after was fine; Mr. Sinclair came to breakfast, and the pony-carriage was brought to the door soon after. The girls were placed in the carriage, with the baskets, a spade and trowel, and off they set in high spirits, Fanny, as they had named the pony, led by John. It was a charming expedition in spite of the cold; occasionally the girls gave place to their brothers, and walked quickly to warm themselves. First crossing a pretty heath with broken undulating ground, and groups of fine fir-trees, they entered a lane with high banks, where the spade was soon brought into requisition, for Primroses grew in profusion.

'You must be prepared for some of these roots dying,' said Mr. Sinclair, 'for many of them are showing flower, and may not bear the moving, but their places can easily be filled up in October or November, which are better months for this work.' A few Violet roots were also found, and then, entering a field, 'Here,' said he, 'is one of the few places where Cowslips grow, for they like a clay soil, and most of the ground in this neighbourhood is composed of gravel and sand. Ah! there they are; now, Harry, take them with plenty of earth, and then they will have the food they like.'

'Food,' said Harry, laughing; 'plants don't eat, do they?'

'Well, not exactly as you do,' replied Mr. Sinclair, 'but still they want food, and their mouths being in

the roots, if they do not find what they want in the ground, they die of starvation, just as truly as you would do if you had no meat and pudding.'

'Then I suppose they want to drink too as well as ourselves,' said Herbert, 'and that is the reason we give them water; I never thought of that.'

'How funny!' said Harry; 'now, when I see a plant looking faded, I shall think it must be hungry or thirsty, and give it lots of earth and water.'

'Remember, however, that they are like children—they may have too much. But I think you have Cowslips enough now, so we will join your sisters, or they will be cold.' The girls, however, had been jumping and running to warm their feet, and were quite ready to set off again. They had not much farther to go, for in a little wood near they found several kinds of Fern, all indeed that Mr. Sinclair thought would grow in the rockery; so, laden with treasures, they returned home all loud in praise of dear Fanny, who seemed as tractable as she was pretty.

Meantime the stones in the rockery had been in some degree arranged by Gardener, and the spaces between filled with earth; so that after their early dinner the children spent some time in planting the roots they had brought, taking care that the Cowslips had plenty of their own food.

'You know,' said Harry to Katie, 'I like plum-pudding best, and you apple-pie, and so Cowslips like clay, and Primroses something else; it's rather an

odd taste, you see, Roly, but, if the poor things like it, I am sure they shall have it, and be welcome.'

The Ferns were placed in the shadiest nooks, and spaces left at mamma's suggestion for a few other plants that like a rocky home, such as Periwinkles, Dwarf Cistus, and Houseleeks, which they might get out of the shrubberies another day.

Some days elapsed, and then Gardener announced that the ground was ready for planting; the plan had been carried out most scrupulously, the geometric beds bordered with Box, the others with red Daisy roots, and the side borders with Thrift; the paths were yet rough and unfinished, and were only to be finally gravelled when the larger shrubs had been planted, as in doing this the new gravel might be soiled.

And now they all met on the spot to consult with Mr. Sinclair and gardener as to the planting. First, the border under the wall was to be attended to. Mr. Sinclair suggested that several roots of Wistaria should be placed between the pear-trees, as there was room and to spare; the flowers would be ornamental in the spring, and the leaves help to cover the walls in summer.

'Yes, sir, I have several in a good state for removal, and which will make a start this year. I have also a Jessamine or two I can spare, and in summer we might plant out some summer creepers; an Ecce-mocarpus and a Cobea would look well. Any number of Rhododendrons, Azaleas, and Kalmias that

are required can be had, as the American beds are being thinned.'

'In that case we had better make this an American bed almost entirely, and then we can have the proper soil for the plants.'

'What soil do they require?' asked Herbert.

'A sandy peat, sir, or bog earth; this I can let you have, as we are clearing away an American bed in the large garden. I think two Rhododendrons, as they will soon grow large, with a few Azaleas, Kalmias, and Swiss Rhododendron or Alp Rose as it is called, would be sufficient to fill the back of this border, leaving space in front for bulbs and other things.'

'I think too,' added Mr. Sinclair, 'if you have more American shrubs to spare, we had better have a few scattered about the other shrubberies to look green in winter.'

'Yes, sir, we can manage that, by giving them a little peat earth about the roots; and we had better have Laurestines, Portugal Laurels, Bays, and common Laurels to fill up and form a background, and particularly here on the west side against the farm-yard. I will at once select these, sir, from the stock, and send them in with the proper earth.'

In the mean time their good friend explained to the children that these shrubs require this particular earth, because it is the kind of soil in which they grow naturally in mountainous countries, as India, America, and Switzerland. He advised that one or two of the Indian, and therefore more delicate kinds,

with the Azaleas, should be planted under the wall, and the hardier species in the other shrubberies.

'Then,' said Harry, 'we have not only to feed our plants properly, I see, but to attend also to their place of living.'

'Yes,' said Mr. Sinclair, 'if you bring foreigners to your climate, you must not expect that they will bear the cold and wet we have in England, if you do not shelter them properly.'

'I never thought of that; I thought trees would grow anywhere,' observed Herbert.

'You will find out that there is much to be learned, before you can garden well and successfully. But here come the men with wheelbarrows of peat earth; look how different it is to the soil already in your garden.' Whilst Gardener arranged the bed, the other men returned for the shrubs, and soon the wheelbarrows came back with fine plants, their roots well covered with large balls of earth; and the gardener explained that he had selected one fine scarlet, and one purple-flowering Rhododendron, also two yellow Azaleas, two Kalmias, and several Swiss Rhododendrons. These were soon planted by the experienced gardeners, and that border at once looked promising, to Mary's great delight. A few shrubs of the same character, but more hardy, were put into the side shrubberies, with Laurels, Laurestines, Arbutus, and other evergreens. Gardener then recommended the *Deutzia scabra*, as a quick-growing shrub, which can be moved at any age, to be introduced in two

places, also Spanish and Portugal Broom, young Lilac, double-flowering Peach, Syringa, and several plants of flowering Currant. The day was spent in planting these to the satisfaction of the children, who saw their garden growing in a very surprising manner. It was explained to them that as some of these shrubs might not succeed very well after their moving, those that died could be renewed in the autumn or following spring. The arbour, too, Mary suggested, should have creepers to shade it; and a fine long plant of Honeysuckle was placed far back on one side, which promised soon to hang over and drape the entrance with its beautiful and sweet-scented flowers; and on the other side a Clematis and a Jessamine were planted. Gardener told her that next month she might have a Passion-flower also put in, and when the time came, Sweet Peas, Nasturtiums, and various other annual climbers, which would mingle their sweet flowers together.

‘But,’ said Mr. Sinclair, ‘we must not forget the beds with waving lines; they might be planted also with shrubs.’

‘We thought of reserving the centre one entirely for standard Roses, with low varieties for covering the ground, and an ornamental shrub in the centre of each of the other beds.’

‘That is a good plan. What shrubs do you propose? they should differ from those in the side borders.’

‘Yes, sir; what do you think of a Gum Cistus in the

centre of the two side beds? We might have one the plain white-flowered kind, and the other the spotted-flowered. I think the young lady would like also the *Coronella*; it is a light gay shrub, and there are two kinds I can spare; also the *Spiræa* with red, and another with milk-white flowers. Perhaps these will be as many as we ought to put in now; we can fill up in the autumn, if more are wanted, or these do not bear their moving.'

'But, Gardener, why cannot they bear moving at any time in the year?' said Herbert.

'Because, sir, plants of all kinds are checked in growth by being moved; their roots have to become accustomed to the new situation, and, in some cases, new roots to be formed, and during this process, the leaves not being properly fed, they wither, and if they have been formed for the year, and the flowers are ready to burst out, they cannot recover, and therefore die; so we move plants when they are in a dormant state, as late autumn, or early spring. Therefore, when the shrubs and herbaceous plants are once in the ground now, you must not make any changes until the autumn; but you may sow annuals for several months, and in June I can supply you with bedding-out plants. I will now fetch the other shrubs we have determined on.'

After these were in the ground, and all well watered to settle their roots and give them a ready supply of food, Gardener said he hoped the very mild weather would continue, that they might recover

from their moving before any frost came, as that would be a great trial to them.

For several days, the weather proving wet, the children found sufficient amusement in talking of their garden, and wondering how the shrubs felt in their new home. Their friend, Mr. Sinclair, paid them a visit, and they were most happy to see him, for he suited them admirably; they found him so very kind, and always ready to give them information.

‘Suppose I explain,’ he said, ‘some of the terms used in speaking of plants, as many of the words made use of by Gardener the other day seemed strange to you. *Perennials* are those plants that live many years, such as your Pear, Apple, and Cherry trees, and all your shrubs, besides some other smaller plants. They are increased by parting the root, or by suckers, which are new plants springing from the root, or by slips from the plant, which, when placed in fresh earth, make new roots. *Biennials* are those plants which increase by seed, producing flowers the second and third year, after which they die, or these may be increased by cuttings from the young parts; and *annuals* are those flowers which are raised only from seed sown in the autumn or spring, and, after producing flower and seed, again die away. Then the difference between *trees*, *shrubs*, and *herbaceous* plants is this: the former are those that grow in woods and orchards, such as Oaks, Elms, Apple and Cherry trees; *shrubs* are smaller, and yet of a woody texture, such as Lilacs, Rhododendrons, Roses, and

many others; and *herbaceous* plants are those that have no woody stem, such as Primroses and Violets.'

'Well, then,' cried Herbert, 'we have all sorts in our little garden, or shall have soon, when the seeds for annuals are sown!'

'But what are bedding-out plants?' added Mary. 'Gardener said he could let us have some in June.'

'All plants that will not bear exposure to our winters out of doors, but that will flourish in our gardens in summer, are called bedding-out plants; because they are kept in the winter secure from frost, in pits or frames, and then, in early summer, being placed in beds ready prepared for them, they begin to flower and look beautiful at once, such as Geraniums, Calceolarias, Verbenas, Petunias, and several more. As soon as the weather is fine, and your garden dry again, you will have to see about the herbaceous plants; and, first, how do you propose to arrange your geometric beds?'

'Oh, Gardener said we must have everything that did not grow tall; but how are we to tell that?' cried Harry.

'Well, I will point out some that never grow tall, and then you can choose. You have twelve geometric beds; now, let us fill them, if we can. Suppose this year you take Nos. 1, 3, 5 and 7, for herbaceous plants, and the alternate numbers for annuals, reserving the four corner and larger beds for Gardener's gift in June of bedding-out plants; till that month, we might have, in those four, bulbs,

such as Crocuses, Snowdrops, and early Tulips, and, though we are too late this year to put them in at the proper time, I think, with great care, we might move some even now to make your garden gay.'

'When ought these to be planted properly?' asked Mary.

'In the autumn: bulbs must be put in the ground where they are intended to flower, some in October, and others in November; and, when they have done flowering in May and June, and their leaves are withered, they may be taken up and dried ready to put in again in the autumn. Well, now for the bed No. 1. Did you ever see a Heartsease grow very tall, Master Harry—as tall as a Hollyhock, for instance?'

'Oh, no.'

'Then Heartsease will be just the thing,' cried Mary, 'and I do so love that flower.'

'Very well; you can have pale-flowering roots in the centre, and dark ones round. Now for No. 3.'

'Can we have Pinks?' said Herbert.

'Yes, that will do; and I think we might have some fine Carnations in the centre, with a border of white Pinks round the edge to make a variety. Now for No. 5. What do you think of Hepatica, with its pretty bright pink flower, and a border of pale yellow and white double Primroses? they would flower together, and early, which will make them valuable to you. Then, for No. 7, we might try this year how the pretty Dwarf Campanula, or bell-flower, will look; it grows so low that its little white bells are hardly

raised above the leaves ; it may be bordered with fine dark-flowering Auriculas.'

'Oh, how pretty these beds will be!' cried all the party ; 'but the annuals must be thought of too.'

'Let us leave these for a day or two, till we have all the herbaceous plants in ; a pretty list we shall have for Gardener to-morrow.'

'Oh!' cried Harry, 'he is such a jolly fellow ; he seems to have everything we want, and is ready to give us more than our garden will hold!'

'Now we know what dwarf or low plants we want, suppose, before we break up our committee-meeting, we make also a list of taller plants for the other beds ; we can put in all these ourselves.'

'Oh, that's what we hoped to be able to do!' cried the boys.

'I think,' said Mr. Sinclair, 'Gardener can give us all those we have fixed on for the small beds ; now if he can also give us a few roots of Hollyhock, Phlox, large purple Larkspur, and Chrysanthemum, which all grow tall and produce handsome showy flowers, they would come in nicely in the borders in advance of the shrubs, and still leave room for lower things in front, which might consist of Sweetwilliams, Polyanthus, hardy Fuchsias, Spiderwort, Snapdragon, Candy-tuft, Wallflower, and any pretty plant he can spare.'

Mr. Sinclair soon after took leave, all the children shaking hands energetically, quite sorry to part with one who took so great an interest in every minute particular about the garden.

For the next week, in the intervals of fine weather, they found enough to do in planting what had been determined on; and soon the three elder children knew how to move small plants with a good ball of earth, and to place them carefully in the ground, so that Harry declared they could not feel the change. Mr. Sinclair taught them to place the roots at regular intervals, the smaller in front, the taller and larger behind. They seemed much puzzled with the variety of plants brought by the gardeners, and scarcely knew one from another; but their good friend was experienced in these things, and gave them an hour or two of his time each day. He arranged the plants, so that each kind was well distributed according to size, colour, and time of flowering. The geometric beds already looked pretty, and little Katie, who had been told she must not step on the beds, for fear of hurting the plants, was delighted to run through the little maze of walks, finding it a never-ending source of pleasure; she would have had Nurse stay the whole day in the garden. When all the plants were in their places, Gardener sent the men to finish the walks, and to lay down the gravel; then the new roller belonging to the children came into use, after the larger one had gone over the paths many times, to make them firm and even. The boys were taught to use the roller so as not to injure the Box and bordering, and to turn the corners nicely. It required some care and ingenuity to avoid doing mischief to the geometric beds, but practice soon made them

proficient. After this, the border under the wall, and the four larger geometric beds, were supplied with bulbs, which were moved with a good quantity of earth; the corners had groups of Crocuses and Snowdrops, and under the wall were placed the Narcissus and Jonquils, with bright purple and scarlet Anemones; whilst on each side of the summer-house in the west border were groups of pretty spring Tulips. In the course of the month the following seeds were sown; Lupins both white and blue, Cape Marigolds, Clarkia, Poppy, Larkspur, and some others, and for one of the geometric beds they fixed on blue and white Nemophila, and then were advised to wait till April to sow the rest with those seeds that were too tender for the cold weather of March.



CHAPTER IV.

APRIL.

Anxious Anticipations—Solution of the Difficulty—Off to Lessons—Names of Plants, English and Botanical—The Manufacture of Labels—The first Flowers—A Drawing-room Bouquet—The Effects of Wind and Rain—Tying up Plants and Flowers—Rolling after Rain—Sowing tender Annuals—Garden Neatness.

MARCH passed but too rapidly with the children, for, though the garden became more interesting and delightful to them as the season advanced, yet the perfect freedom they had so long enjoyed was now to cease, and more regular lessons were to commence on the first of April. Herbert looked forward to study with great pleasure, for he was naturally fond of mental occupation, and had hitherto found little trouble in his lessons; but he felt some little timidity at the thought of a new master, particularly one so very learned-looking as the good clergyman whom they saw every Sunday at church, but to whom they had scarcely yet spoken. They had soon found to their surprise, that their kind and active friend Mr.

Sinclair was the curate; and they did not like him the less for the simple yet excellent advice he gave them from the pulpit—advice which they could perfectly understand, and which was given with an earnestness that made them try very hard to follow. Harry, more fond of laughing than Latin, and gardening than grammar, saw the time pass with less satisfaction than the rest; he was by no means an idle boy, but only accustomed to a lady's teaching, Mr. Gordon's grey hair and spectacles had made a profound impression. He feared that *hic, hæc, hoc*, and what little he knew besides, must appear so childish to so old a gentleman, that he would be plunged at once into unheard-of difficulties, and have no time for anything but to master them; which the brave boy determined to do, for he knew he could not please his kind father more, nor thank him better, for all his indulgence. Mamma's smile of approbation, too, was well worth any amount of trouble to gain.

April came; and a real April day it proved, with rain and fair, dark clouds and sunshine, to which, if the boys had been poetical, they might have compared their own hopes and fears; but they never thought of it, and only looked a trifle more grave at the breakfast-table than was usually the case.

'Well, boys,' said Mr. Hamilton, cheerfully, 'quite ready for lessons this morning? You are to be at the Rectory from nine till one, and five minutes' run will take you there. Herbert, I have bought

you a watch, as I think you are old enough to take care of one; so there will be no excuse for want of punctuality.'

'What a beauty! Oh, thank you, thank you, papa! I will take such care of it, and never be late, if Harry will be ready!'

'I will try,' said his brother, colouring a little, for punctuality was not yet one of his virtues.

'Very well,' was the answer; 'if you succeed, you will have earned a watch, too, when you are as old as Herbert.'

Whilst the children were still examining the pretty watch, which showed they had yet a quarter of an hour to spare, and Mary was promising to make a watchguard for Herbert, Mr. Sinclair came in, and, after the usual greetings, said—

'Come, Herbert and Harry, if you are ready, I will take you down to the Rectory; it is nearly nine.'

'Thank you, sir,' said Herbert; 'we are quite ready.'

'Why, Harry, you look very grave; are you sorry to go?'

'The foolish boy is afraid of his tutor's spectacles and grey hairs, I believe,' said papa.

'I did not know that I had been promoted to those appendages yet,' said Mr. Sinclair, laughing; 'and my grey hairs are not, I think, very numerous.'

'But,' said Harry, looking at his friend with wide-open eyes, 'I never said you had, sir; I mean our tutor.'

‘Well, my dear boy, I am your tutor, and hope——’

‘You!’ exclaimed both the boys, looking incredulous, but very happy.

‘Yes,’ said their father, ‘Mr. Sinclair has kindly undertaken to teach you, and I hope you will be very good with him. I did not undeceive you, Harry, in your notion about Mr. Gordon, because your kind friend wished to know more of your dispositions than you would have shown perhaps, had you looked upon him as your future instructor; he also wished to gain your confidence, and to show you that a tutor could also be a kind friend, a pleasant companion, a good classic, and a practical gardener.’

Harry could not control his joy, nor express it either; so, catching little Katie in his arms, he covered her with rather boisterous kisses, and then said, taking Mr. Sinclair’s hand, ‘I am quite ready, sir, and so happy.’

‘And so am I,’ added Herbert, putting his watch in his pocket, ‘and it just wants five minutes. I don’t think you will ever be too late now, Harry.’

‘No, indeed, not I; you won’t have to fetch us again, Mr. Sinclair, but it is very pleasant for the first time.’

‘I thought so,’ he answered, and off went the trio. Then mamma and Mary adjourned to the study, and were happily employed till one, when the boys returned in the liveliest mood, and told how kindly Mr. Sinclair had examined them in what they knew, giving them plenty to prepare, but not more

than they could do well in two hours ; ' and he advised us,' said Herbert, ' to do our lessons after tea till the days were longer, and to have all the afternoons for our garden.'

' Do you know, mamma,' cried Harry, ' Mr. Gordon came into the study, and spoke so kindly to us ; and Mrs. Gordon too, she asked us about our garden ; and oh, Mary, she said we might come and look whether there was anything in hers that we wanted. She is such a nice old lady !'

After dinner, hats and warm cloaks were put on, and the happy four hastened to the garden ; Papa accompanied them, for he had not seen it since the herbaceous plants had been put in. He was delighted with the appearance and all the arrangements, and thought that every plant looked promising, the mild weather and soft rains having been a great advantage ; but he soon discovered that the young gardeners did not know the names of their plants, confusing those of the American shrubs with the deciduous, while of the herbaceous plants they made sad confusion, and it was evident that, at present, they knew nothing about them.

' But, my dear children, this will never do,' he said ; ' you must try and remember what plants you have in your own garden, or you will be very ignorant ; and, besides, you cannot talk about them till you know their names. How awkward it would be if your friends and relations had no names, and you had to speak of one as the person who lived in

such a house or street, or to speak of the lady with black eyes, or of the gentleman with a beard !'

'Oh, how troublesome that would be !' said Harry, laughing ; 'but it is so difficult to remember all the plants and shrubs.'

'Not at all, if you set about it properly. Off, boys, to the carpenter, and ask him to give you some good straight laths ; bring these with you, then call at the painter's, and desire he will send me directly a pot of white paint. Have each a sharp strong knife ready, and I will soon make you remember the names of your plants.'

The boys thought papa must be joking ; but they set off, laughing however, and conjecturing together how laths and white paint could teach them the names of their plants. In the mean time Mary was sent into the house for a soft black lead pencil, and a piece of flannel. The boys returned out of breath, their good garden knives ready for action. Papa took them into the tool-house, and gave them directions to cut up the laths into pieces about six inches in length, a little rounded at one end, and pointed at the other. After some few awkward attempts, each turned out a dozen tolerably good-looking ones. By that time a boy came with the paint, and they were shown how to rub their labels thinly over with it, by means of the flannel, which, taking up less paint, is more convenient than a brush. Papa then wrote with the pencil a name upon each before the paint was quite dry.

'Ah, I see,' said Herbert, 'these are for labels for the plants.'

'You are right, and when you have made enough we will place one to every plant you have, and by that means you will all learn the names, and they will not easily be forgotten. I shall put the English names only now, but next year we will have the botanical or Latin names as well.'

'But, papa,' said Mary, 'what is the use of having Latin as well as English names?'

'Because, my dear, it is only plants that are natives of England, or those long introduced here, that have names in our language. Foreign plants have foreign names, and it would only puzzle us, if we had a dozen languages to contend with. Learned men therefore give every plant a Latin or Greek name, and thus botanists in all countries of the world can use one name, instead of many, and by this plan there is less confusion.'

'Papa,' said Herbert, 'may I make a set of labels for the Latin names also? As I know a little Latin, I should like to have their botanical names.'

'Yes; Mr. Sinclair will tell you all of them, and write them for you, I am sure.'

The boys then worked hard for a couple of hours each afternoon, and soon they had the pleasure of seeing neat little white sticks to every plant, and instead of talking of 'this plant' or 'that shrub' or 'that white or red flower,' they called it by its right name, either in English or Latin. Another set was

made for the annuals, as Mary found she should soon forget where they were sown.

In the middle of the month, several very wet and stormy days in succession prevented the children from being in their garden, but a bright afternoon made Mary eager to pay it a visit. She and her brothers examined every bed with great attention, and, to their joy, they found evident signs that there would soon be many flowers. The Crocuses had been some time in bud, though they had escaped unnoticed, but now some of their golden eyes were open to the sun, to the delight of the children; the Jonquils also, and *Narcissus poeticus*, had opened their elegant flowers, and, in one geometric bed, they spied a few Anemones, both red and purple, and, to add to their happiness, the fine red Tulips on either side of the arbour were found to have opened in the bright sunshine. Whilst admiring these, little Katie screamed with delight and surprise, for some red Daisies in the bordering had attracted her eye as she skipped along the walks, her favourite amusement; and on the rockery Harry discovered a number of pale Primroses and Cowslips, Periwinkle, and a few Violets. They all rushed back to the house calling to their mamma that they had found flowers in their garden, and begging her to come and look. She complied immediately, and then Mary made her first nosegay, and presented it to mamma for the drawing-room, where it was placed in a vase on the centre table, and greatly admired by papa when he came in.

From this time she supplied the breakfast-room with flowers, and Katie always begged a nosegay for Nurse at the same time, which Mary had the greatest pleasure in giving her. She soon, with her mamma's assistance, learned to arrange flowers neatly, and in good taste, and this became a regular duty three or four times a week.

One day in going into the garden, after a very windy night, she found, to her great sorrow, many of the plants ready to flower, prostrate on the ground, and hastened to ask Gardener what could be done; he good-naturedly went to her assistance, explaining that all the plants which grow tall, and also the flowering stalks, must be supported with sticks, suitable to their size and height, and he showed her how to tie the slender stems to the stick with pieces of bass, a supply of which he had brought with him. Harry volunteered to cut the sticks the right length for her, and point them at one end that they might easily run into the ground. Gardener also told her, that when the larger herbaceous plants, the Hollyhock, the Phlox, and others, grew tall, they must each have a strong stake given to them, or the weight of their flowers, in wet weather particularly, would bring them to the ground; and he at once sent an undergardener to place stakes to the Broom plants, which were already hanging far out of the perpendicular. He pointed out to Harry that the walks should always be rolled soon after rain, but not while the ground was sufficiently wet to make it adhere to the

roller. As Harry delighted in hard work, he called Herbert to help, and they had famous fun for some time, whilst Mary neatly tied up everything that had been injured by the wind.

At the end of the month they sowed more seeds in patches, in the borders, and about the arbour, sweet and everlasting Peas, and also Nasturtiums. One of the geometric beds was sown with Mignonette seed, as being a low-growing annual, and its sweet scent would be very agreeable to all whilst sitting in the arbour; another with two species of *Nemophila*, the blue and the white flowering kinds; and a third with the *Collinsia grandiflora*. Mr. Sinclair showed her that the larger seeds, such as Lupins, Peas, and others of a similar size, should be placed in rings or in threes or fours, about half an inch deep in the soil, and then covered up carefully; the smaller seeds, as Mignonette, are better sown on a smaller patch of ground, neatly and evenly prepared, by taking off about a quarter of an inch deep of mould, removing the stones, then marking a ring with a flowerpot, and scattering the seeds in that spot only, covering them lightly with soil again. She never omitted to add one of the nice labels her brothers made, with the name neatly written on it. Thus, what with sowing seeds, tying up flower-stalks, making labels, and rolling gravel, the children always found enough to do. There were no weeds at present, for the ground was new; raking, however, became a fresh employment. The boys attended to

the shrubberies, and after watching Gardener several times, and seeing how evenly he did it, leaving no marks of the rake, they became quite expert. He taught them to begin with the back of the bed, and rake towards the front, picking out any very large stones, and breaking up the mould well; to be careful not to injure the plants, and to avoid all places marked with labels where annuals were sown. A fine rake did best for the geometric beds; but as some of these were now either full of delicate herbaceous plants, or seeds, there was not much to do in that way. As Mary did not like to see a single dead leaf, she spent some hours, two or three times a week, in cutting away all that appeared; and having procured a garden basket to carry away rubbish, the garden was thus a picture of neatness and beauty.





CHAPTER V.

MAY.

May-day Children—Little Annie visited—Fruit-trees in Blossom—Dahlias—Stocks—The Rose-trees in Leaf—Their Enemies—China Roses—Description of Standards—May Bouquets—Shrubs beginning to Flower—Garden Neatness—Garden Aprons.

A BRIGHT though cold morning greeted the children on the first of May, and during breakfast they were greatly amused by the various groups of village children, who, dressed in their best, brought garlands and nosegays to show, in exchange for a few pence, which had been collected by each of the children in readiness for this rural fête. Little Katie had begged her mamma to change her only sixpence into twelve halfpennies, that she might not have to refuse any of the expected applicants, to many of whose garlands they had the day before contributed some of the cherished flowers from their own garden. Some wreaths were composed entirely

of wild flowers, such as Primroses, Cowslips, and wild Hyacinths, but others betrayed their garden origin; and the children, now deeply interested in all that belonged to flowers, asked the names of several they had not in their own ground, in order that they might introduce them another year; there was the pretty Columbine, the yellow Alyssum, and the curious-looking Fritillary.

In the midst of their lively chatter, Mr. Sinclair entered, saying that, with mamma's leave, he was going to run away with Mary and Katie for an hour, as well as the boys, who should begin their lessons later that morning. Consent was given, and hats and coats being put on, their friend asked Mary if she could spare a few flowers for a little invalid girl, who could not join the merry May-day groups. 'Oh yes, yes!' cried all four, running towards their own domain, followed by Mr. Sinclair. Each gathered some of their favourites, and seated in the arbour, Mary's now skilful fingers soon formed into a tasteful nosegay the variously-coloured Crocus, of which a few were yet left; Anemones—scarlet and purple—one or two Tulips, and the only monthly Rose yet in bloom, which good little Mary, valuing very highly herself, hoped the poor sick child would appreciate accordingly,

'Run, Harry, please,' she said, 'and see if there are a few Violets on the rockery, and, Katie dear, bring some pretty red Daisies.'

These were soon added, and then the whole party



THE FIRST VISIT TO LITTLE ANNIE.

See page 67.

proceeded to the village, and entered a cottage that stood apart from the rest.

‘Here, Annie,’ said Mr. Sinclair to a little pale girl lying on a small neat bed in one corner of the room, ‘I have brought some young friends to see you.’ The children looked shyly at each other, and a bright colour came for an instant into the face of the sick child, when Katie, who thought her kisses were a sovereign remedy for sickness or sorrow, stroked and kissed the little pale face.

‘You love flowers, I know,’ said Mr. Sinclair, ‘and this young lady has brought you some.’

‘Oh, thank you, miss, how pretty they are!’ replied the child; ‘please, mother, throw those dead Cowslips away, and bring some fresh water. Look, there is a Rosebud too; how sweet it is! I do so love Roses.’

By these words Mary’s little sacrifice was amply repaid; then placing them within reach of Annie’s hand, she said—

‘I will send you some flowers every morning, if I may; we shall soon have plenty.’

‘And I will bring them,’ cried Harry; ‘it will only take two minutes more to come round here, so remember, Herby, it must be seven minutes to nine instead of five.’

‘Yes,’ said their friend, smiling, ‘you must be very punctual, for I shall not excuse you if you are late; the two extra minutes must be taken out of play, not lesson hours; but I think, Mary, every other day will be better, or Annie will have too many flowers,

and it will amuse her to arrange and give them fresh water.'

After renewed thanks from the little girl, the children took leave of her, and then Mr. Sinclair explained to them that an accident had injured poor Annie's back, and that the doctor did not think she would ever be able to walk again.

'Oh poor little Annie,' said Mary, 'how sad to lie there for ever!'

'Not for ever, dear child,' returned Mr. Sinclair; 'a few years, perhaps very few, and she will be here no longer; and *then* the happy for ever will come.' The children looked very grave, and were silent, till, reaching the lodge gates, the little girls entered, while their brothers turned into the lane leading to the Rectory. Mary related to her mamma the sad story of little Annie, and the promise they had made about the flowers.

'I think you may do more for the poor child than that, dear,' said Mrs. Hamilton; 'we will ask the doctor what will be good for her, and then I shall expect you to see that everything is provided to make her happy and comfortable. Cook shall make jelly, or anything necessary; and as she lives so near, you might go and read to her occasionally.'

'And what can I do, mamma?' said Katie.

'Help to make any clothes she may want,' answered mamma, 'and say your pretty hymns to her.'

'Oh yes, that I will; may I learn a new one this morning?'

Annie became a new interest for the children, and if ever Harry was too late to carry the fresh flowers (which did not often happen), the sorrow he felt, at the thought of her little patient face, was ample punishment for the fault.

One morning, to their great surprise and delight, they made the discovery that their fruit-trees were covered with pretty blossoms; these trees being so much above their heads, they had not observed the buds, but now that they were all expanded, their attention was attracted, and they began to think of the fruit they might have the pleasure of gathering. The cherries, their papa told them, would be ripe in July, but the apples would not be ready to gather till quite late in the year—in September and October—the pears earlier, but they must ask Gardener what kinds they were. He pronounced the latter an early kind, but as the apples were King Pippins and Wellingtons, they must not be gathered till late. The names amused the children, and they now no longer forgot to watch the progress of their tall trees as well as the shrubs and plants in their borders. Gardener now thought that their beds and borders were nearly as full as they ought to be, but as he was putting out some plants he had forced in the frame, he spared a few for the children; amongst them were two roots which Harry thought, from their ugly appearance, could never produce the fine handsome flowers he had been accustomed to hear called Dahlias. Gardener told him that these being Mexican plants, and the

roots not bearing the frost in winter, he took them up in the autumn, and kept them in a warm dry place through the winter; in March he placed the roots in a hotbed, and then they sprouted, and were ready to plant out in May. They soon found places for them towards the back of the deep border, where they could be seen from the summer-house, and he warned the children that as they grew tall, and heavy with leaf, they would require strong stakes to tie them to; in planting, he put some peat mould, mixed with sand, about their roots, as that makes a good soil for them. He also brought a few plants of Brompton and Queen Stocks, which he had kept in the frame during winter; the latter, he said, was a shrubby plant, and in June would have scarlet or purple flowers; the former was a biennial, and its handsome blossom would be in perfection in July. Mary asked him for seeds of an annual that had red flowers for her fourth bed, as she had nothing sown there yet, and that colour would be the best; this, he told her, was difficult, most annuals having purple, blue, yellow, or white flowers. Perhaps ten-weeks' Stock would be pretty, though it was rather a common plant, or she could have later, *Alonsoa grandiflora*, or *Calandrinia umbellata*, or the pretty red Flax. He could give them also some orange-red Nasturtiums he was rearing, and they would look well allowed to trail over the bed, if Mary would be careful to keep them within bounds, and not let them grow beyond the Box edging. In looking over the bed of Pinks and

Carnations, he told Mary to examine each flowering stem, and when there were two flowers, to pinch off the smaller bud, and then the other would become much finer. He also pointed out to them that their Rose-trees were beginning to put out their leaves, and soon the buds would appear, ready to open next month, when they must be on the watch, for insects would attack and injure them. He advised them to pinch off every leaf they found curled up, as it showed that a small grub or caterpillar had made its house there, and would, if allowed to remain, do great injury to the tree.

‘It is better,’ he said, ‘to destroy these creatures in this state, than to let them live to become beetles, moths, or butterflies.’

‘Beetles!’ said Herbert.

‘Yes, master Herbert, the rose beetle, and other kinds too. Ask your papa about them; he can of course tell you more than I have time for. When the buds appear,’ he added, ‘they will most likely be covered with a green insect we call blight, and this must be destroyed, or the buds will shrivel and be good for nothing; I will tell you how to get rid of them when they appear, and when you are learning about the rose beetle, ask about the aphid, or green fly.’ He then pointed out that some of the China or monthly Roses planted against the old paling were already in bud, and that after a few days Mary would have abundance of Roses to add to her nose-gays. When examining the standard Rose-trees in

the centre bed, he told them the peculiar names that were given to them, which he wrote on labels, that they might not forget. They were *Souvenir de Malmaison*, *Saffrano*, *Géant des Batailles*, a Moss Rose, and an old-fashioned Cabbage Rose. Herbert asked why they were called standards, and Gardener explained that the stem or stock, as it is called, was the common Dog Rose out of the hedges; which is strong and accustomed to our climate; upon that were grafted or budded Roses of a more tender kind, which in this way were made hardy and able to bear the cold, thus producing finer flowers.

Herbert asked what budding meant, and was told that in July and August, a young shoot or bud, as it is called, must be taken off a good kind of Rose-tree with a piece of bark attached, and when a slit had been made in the stem of the Dog Rose, or standard, the bud must be introduced into the opening, and a piece of wet bass tied carefully round to keep it in its place, and exclude the air; the sap from the standard then runs into the bud, which will grow and produce its own kind of leaves and flowers instead of those of the Dog Rose, and the latter must not be allowed to have any growing shoots, or the nourishment will not go into the new graft. He added, that at the proper time in the summer he would show them how all this was done.

Both Herbert and Mary were much amused with the notion of one plant being made to grow on another, and looked at their standards with greater

interest than before, Mary longing for the time when she might carry to her mamma the first Moss Rose bud. Her bouquets now consisted of a profusion of flowers from the bulbous plants; also red and purple Anemones, Auriculas, double Primroses both white and lilac, Heartsease, the pretty Pulmonaria, or lungwort, its flowers some blue and purple, others pink; Wallflowers, red and white Daisies, some fine bunches of Polyanthus, besides Alyssum, Primroses, Cowslips, and quantities of Violets, these plants having done well in the shady nook of the rockery. How pleasant it was to carry to mamma a bunch of sweet-smelling Violets, and place them in a little glass made on purpose, with a wire top to support them! Towards the middle of the month, she had a fine bunch of China Roses and buds to place on the breakfast-room table, and she never forgot her little sick friend. Some of the shrubs were also in bloom; the Wistaria had produced a few bunches of elegant flowers; the pretty Swiss Rhododendron was showing its pink buds, and had opened a flower here and there. One lovely bit of Azalea was gathered, and several of the beautiful pendent bunches of pink flowers from the Ribes or flowering currant, and, as a contrast, a few sprays from the Deutzia completed a bouquet.

About this time Mr. Sinclair paid a visit to their garden; he had been so much occupied with the boys' studies in the morning, and his parish duties after dinner, that it was some time since he had seen it. He was warm in his admiration of the improve-

ments, commending its generally neat appearance, but observing some garden tools lying about, a rake in one place, the trowel left on the bed from the day before, and chips from the boys' carpentering work near the tool-house, he spoke to the children about neatness, telling them that an untidy garden was very unsightly, and that, as they had a place for everything, there was no excuse; they should put away all that had been used, not only to preserve the neatness of their garden, but because heavy rain injured the tools; and the walks should always be cleared of litter, and swept carefully and lightly to avoid disturbing the gravel. 'You will find plenty of this kind of work in the autumn, boys,' he said; 'when the leaves fall from the trees and shrubs, you will have your garden strewed with them every morning; and look, even these few weeds must not be allowed to stay in your borders. You do not want to cultivate them, and must not let one grow anywhere; it is a sign of the sluggard, and that is a sad character. It is better to pull weeds up with your hands as soon as they appear; and if this is continually done, you need not have recourse to hard work with a hoe.'

Herbert and Harry promised to keep down the weeds, and sweep the paths clean, and the new brooms they had bought in the village now came into use. The children had often regretted that their pretty watering-pots had never been taken from the nails on which they hung in the tool-house, as the weather

had been sufficiently showery ; but they looked forward to the drier month of June to give them the pleasure of a new employment.

About this time, Mrs. Hamilton advised Mary to make herself a couple of stout garden aprons, with pockets, in which she might keep her scissors, labels, gloves, and the other small things required. This employed her working hours for some days, and she found her apron so very useful, that Katie begged she might have one too, and, with kind Nurse's help, the little woman was soon equipped in one, looking very busy and important.



CHAPTER VI.

JUNE

Early Morning in the Garden—A Tortoiseshell Butterfly—Nightingales—Enjoyment of the Arbour—Addition to the Garden—The Management of Strawberries—Bulbous Plants after Flowering—Their subsequent Care—Bedding-out Plants put in—Geraniums, Verbenas, Calceolarias, Petunias, and other Frame Plants—June Nosegays—A well-stocked Garden—Shrubs in Flower—Buds of Rose-trees—Aphides, and the Way to destroy them.

‘OH, MAMMA, what a lovely morning!’ said Mary, entering the breakfast-room one day early in June, with the usual bunch of flowers for Annie, including a Rose, which was never omitted.

‘Yes,’ cried Harry; ‘it is so pleasant; we have been out since seven o’clock, weeding and raking!’

‘Where is Herbert?’ said mamma.

‘Oh, he spied a new sort of butterfly, or moth, or something,’ returned Harry, ‘and he ran in to fetch his butterfly book to see what it is.’

'A *something* would indeed be a new kind of insect, Harry,' said Mr. Hamilton, 'and most moths fly at night, so I should think it is a butterfly; and here comes Herbert to enlighten us. Well, my boy, what is your new acquaintance?'

'A tortoiseshell butterfly, papa, and such a beauty! yesterday I saw a tiny blue one, just the colour of the blue *Nemophila* in the garden. Mamma, when do the nightingales leave off singing? We don't hear them half so often as we did.'

'You must not expect to hear them much more this year, Herbert; but your favourite butterflies will visit you all the summer, and you will find, as in your flowers, a regular succession of new kinds.'

This was pleasant news, and led to much conversation; but soon Harry, looking at Herbert's watch, which was always placed on the table, exclaimed, starting up—

'Come in double-quick time, Herby; it only wants six minutes and a half, and Annie must have those Roses; so follow, follow, follow me,' he cried, singing the well-known words, which Herbert took up, replying, 'Whither shall I follow, follow, follow; whither shall I follow, follow thee?' and, as they ran down the avenue, they laughingly tried to find a rhyme relating to little Annie, to replace the 'greenwood tree,' which Harry said would not do at all.

The weather was now so warm and pleasant that the arbour became a favourite haunt, and Mrs. Hamilton could not please her children more than by

taking her work there in the afternoon. On one of these happy days, when, towards evening, the children were busy watering the plants that seemed to require it, papa came into the garden, and desired the children to come with him, as he had something to show them. Passing the end of the old paling, and turning the corner into the kitchen garden, he pointed out to them a narrow border running its whole length, and said—

‘I have been thinking that, as you have ornamented one side of this old fence so nicely, you deserve to have the other; and, as it is filled with young strawberry plants, it will give you some more fruit for your own property, and teach you the management of them.’

‘Thank you, dear papa,’ was heard in chorus; and Harry, whose especial pet was little Katie, proposed that she should be made strawberry gatherer, as the other fruit was beyond her reach.

‘You see, Roly’s back is not so long as mine,’ he said, drawing himself up to his full height (which was not so great after all), ‘and her little feet can go easily between the rows.’

‘Very well,’ said papa; ‘but wait, master Harry, till the fruit comes, before you appoint your deputy-picker.’

‘What are all these pretty little white flowers? May I have them?’ said Katie, stooping down, as if to show Harry that even her little back must bend to gather strawberries.

‘No, dear, you must not gather these white flowers

if you wish for strawberries; they are the blossom, that, like those beautiful ones you saw on the apple, pear, and cherry trees, will turn into fruit at the proper time; in about a fortnight, perhaps, Katie may find a few strawberries instead of white blossoms.'

'Oh, that will be charming!' cried all four; and again thanking papa, Harry and Katie had a famous scamper round the great kitchen garden; and then they all returned to the arbour, chatting about their new acquisition, and the kindness of papa in giving it to them. They wanted to know all about strawberries, when the fruit would be ripe, and what care the plants required. He explained that Gardener had put them into the soil they liked best, which was a strong rich mould; that they were planted in rows, which made the fruit more easy to get at when ripe—this would be next month—and they must remember that strawberries liked moisture; so, if the weather became dry, the bed must be well watered, particularly when the flowers were falling, and the fruit making its appearance.

'You must not, Gardener tells me, use the watering-pot with the rose on,' he continued, 'because the flowers should not be wetted, but the water must be applied at once to the roots, and great care taken to keep the bed clear of weeds; so there is more work for you, boys. Then, when the fruit is forming, little side shoots will appear, called runners (because they run along the ground), each producing several new plants; as these, if allowed to remain, would weaken

the old plant, they are generally cut off and thrown away, till, when new roots are wanted, these runners are taken care of, and, being planted out, bear fruit the following year.'

Mary asked her papa what she could do with the bulbous plants to make them look neat, as the flowers were over, and the leaves looked shabby and forlorn. Gardener had told her they were to be taken up; might she do it now?

'You must be patient about this,' said papa; 'these plants have given you great pleasure, and you must not dislike the poor things now, because after they have done their best to look gay, they become shabby. As soon as their leaves look yellow and withered, you may take them up; for this purpose Gardener will lend you a fork, which is better than a spade or trowel, for then you do not cut or injure the bulbs. Harry, run and fetch a fork, and I will show you how; here are some Crocuses in a proper state for taking up. Put the fork into the ground at a short distance from the clump, and raise the earth gently; you see the bulbs are then easily moved; now shake the earth away, and lay them under your south wall to dry. When the leaves are quite decayed you may put the bulbs in bags, and hang them within your tool-house till the autumn, when they will be ready for planting out again. You must do the same with all your bulbs when they are ready.'

'But, papa, why has all this to be done?'

‘Because most bulbs come from hot, dry countries—the Tulip and Narcissus from the Levant and south of Europe, the Crocus also—and as the summers are hotter and drier than ours, they lie dormant during that period; whereas in our climate, in which we have so much wet weather even in the summer, they would be injured by decay in the moist earth, and probably spoiled for the following year. We therefore try to imitate nature by taking up the bulbs, and placing them in a dry situation.’

‘Then why must we not take them up till their leaves are withering?’ asked Herbert.

‘Because, after the flowering for this year is over, the sap in the leaves provides nutriment for the new leaves and flowers which are being formed for next year. If, therefore, you cut them off, or take up the bulbs before they have done their duty, you ruin the hopes of new flowers for the next season. These clumps of Crocus leaves, Mary, may be tied neatly together with bass, or they may be twisted round each other and pegged down to look less untidy, till they are withered. There are some kinds of Crocus that flower only in the autumn, and are planted during this month for that purpose; go and ask Gardener if he can give you some bulbs for one group (you will not have room for more), that you may become acquainted with their habits; we will put them into this spot near the rockery.’

On Mary’s return she joyfully announced that Gardener had told her the bedding-out plants were

now being arranged, and that he should to-morrow bring some for their garden.

The following afternoon the party assembled to receive the plants for their four large geometric beds; they agreed that No. 10 should be filled with scarlet Geraniums; No. 12 with variously-coloured Verbenas, principally however red; No. 11 with dwarf plants of Calceolaria; and No. 9 with Petunia, both white and purple. These plants were brought in the pots in which they had been all the winter, and the children watched how skilfully the gardener took them out, without disturbing the ball of earth, and placed them in the holes ready prepared, covering them carefully with mould. He did not put the plants in irregularly, but at measured distances, so that there should be some sort of uniformity in the bed. All four corner beds being arranged to their satisfaction, Gardener told them that he had a few plants left which he thought would look well in the border by the wall in front of the Azaleas and Kalmias, as the bulbs which had till now looked so gay there, were many of them ready to be taken up. They found room for a few of each of the four kinds, thus making a variety of colour, to contrast with the more formal geometric beds. He had not forgotten his promise of an annual for the still empty bed, for which Mary desired a bright-looking flower, and had brought four plants of deep red Nasturtium, which she was to keep within due bounds, and coax not to grow over the Box. For their other beds he presented them also with

a few frame plants, as *Cuphea*, *Lobelia splendens*, *Mimulus*, or monkey flower, purple Groundsel, and several plants of the pretty small blue *Lobelia*. Every one of these was greatly admired by the children, and they watched Gardener and their papa with the greatest interest; the latter telling them he thought they must not think of putting in many more plants this year, as their beds were quite sufficiently full, and they would have enough to do to keep them all neat, and in good order. The American shrubs were now in great beauty, the *Rhododendrons* splendid, the *Azaleas* covered with their brilliant yellow flowers, and the *Kalmias* opening their curious pink buds. The *Deutzia scabra*, too, had very early put out its light green leaves, and many sprays of pretty white flowers followed. The *Lilacs* had been beautiful, but had given place to these foreign friends, whose beauty almost eclipsed their more quiet colours. The bed of *Heartsease* was beginning to look quite gay, many of the plants showing their handsome flowers. To add to her nosegays, Mary had also *Pinks*, *Larkspur*, *Lupines*, *Candytuft*, *Clarkia*, *Nemophila*, and *Thrift*, of which there was an abundance round the border. The *Honeysuckle* and *Clematis* were also doing well on the arbour, and promising flower; the *Syringa* gave out a few of its very sweet orange-like blossoms; and the *Gum Cistus* presented her with one or two of its pretty flowers, but they faded so soon, that she thought it better to leave the few there were on the bush. The scarlet *Geraniums* and other bedding plants were at

the end of the month looking settled in their new beds, and she had a few of their bright flowers to gather.

A few days after, Mary was delighted to find numerous buds ready to open on the standard and dwarf Rose-trees; but care came with the pleasure, for one morning, after rain had kept her in the house for a time, she saw that the beautiful buds were covered with the small green insect, of whose curious history their papa had explained to them as much as they could comprehend.

‘These things as well as caterpillars and grubs,’ he said, ‘must be destroyed, or we should have neither flowers nor fruit; and as their natural life is very short, and they may be killed without suffering, it is not wrong to do so.’

Mary asked Gardener’s assistance, which he had promised to give her at the proper time, and he told her that there were several methods of destroying the green fly. Some people dip the ends of the shoots into strong tobacco water, or syringe them with it—the latter would be the best for her; or she might lay the shoot or bud on her hand and brush the little flies off. Another plan she might try, was dusting them over, after wetting the spray, with equal portions of sulphur and tobacco or snuff, and as they did not like this they avoided those shoots;—but this mixture must be carefully washed off again the next morning. Soap and water also might be tried, but after all, there was nothing like watchfulness, and getting rid of the insects by any means.





CHAPTER VII.

JULY.

Fruit and Flowers in profusion—The Birthday—Dishes of Strawberries—A Use for cut Grass—Snails and Slugs—Anticipations of a Cherry Feast—The Hope frustrated by Robbers—The Food of Birds—Netting—A Visit to the Summer-house—Birthday Presents—Commander Hamilton—The Dessert Service—Books and Dolls—Decking the Arbour—The Tea—The Layering of Carnations—Piping Pinks—Flukes, Bizarres, Picotees, and Painted Ladies—Increase of Knowledge an Increase of Pleasure—Bulbous Roots housed—Budding Roses and more of their Management—Mary's Bouquets.

JULY came with its profusion of fruit and flowers; the children watched the progress of both with equal pleasure, but though the ripening of their own cherries and strawberries was looked forward to with very natural delight, yet feeling that their flowers had been their more peculiar care, the Pinks and Roses had still greater interest in their eyes.

The twelfth of July was to be a grand day, to which they had all looked forward with great pleasure, for it was Harry's birthday, the first birthday at the Manor House, and it was to be honoured with a whole holiday. Papa, mamma, and Mr. Sinclair had accepted the invitation (sent a whole fortnight before) to drink tea in the summer-house at six o'clock, and, as the day approached, the weather was anxiously watched, lest this showery month should, ill-naturedly, fix on the 12th for a rainy day. The strawberries had been ripening beautifully; little Katie, with Nurse's help, had brought them several dishes already, and the day before the all-important one, Mary and Herbert had, after due examination, pronounced that there would be two splendid dishes ready for tea. Gardener, happening to be near, was called to look, and he said—

‘You see now, Miss Mary, the use of the grass we put under the strawberry plants after mowing the lawn; if the fruit had touched the ground, the heavy rain we had yesterday would have quite spoilt it all, but the dry grass has kept it clean. Some people use bits of slate, or glass, or tile, for this purpose, but as we have plenty of lawn I prefer the dry grass.’

‘But look, Gardener,’ said Herbert, ‘half the strawberries in this row are partly eaten away; what is that with?’

‘That is caused by snails and slugs, sir, and I will tell you what must be done to prevent it. In the evening, gather a good number of cabbage leaves,

and strew them between the rows. The snails and slugs will crawl under these in the morning to avoid the sun; you can then collect them easily and put them into a garden-pot, and I will see that they are destroyed.'

The cherry-trees were also examined; the fruit had been turning red for some days, and Herbert, climbing up, found that they felt as well as looked ripe. 'So Harry and I will gather them before breakfast to-morrow, Mary,' he said, 'and then we can help to make all neat, while you deck the arbour.'

The morning came, and was as fine as our holiday children could wish. The boys rushed out at seven o'clock, and, asking Gardener for a short ladder, carried it in high glee to the cherry-trees. Mary followed with a basket lined with strawberry leaves that the delicate fruit might not be injured. But when the trio arrived at the expected scene of action, what was their surprise and consternation to find all the best of the fruit gone, and the ground under the trees strewn with cherry-stones! Mary looked grieved, Herbert puzzled, and Harry as nearly angry as he could be on his birthday.

'Who can it be?' said Herbert at last, after they had all exclaimed at their loss in various tones.

'Birds,' suggested Mary.

'To be sure, it is the birds, mischievous greedy little things!' said Harry; 'they might have been satisfied with something else, and not just have fixed upon our cherries! They are cunning little things too,

to come so early, when they knew we should not be up!'

'But look,' said Mary; 'there are a few left on those lower boughs, and we might as well have a small dish, as we cannot have a large one.'

'Well, I sha'n't forgive the birds in a hurry,' said Harry, 'though I dare say Herby is glad that his pets have had a good breakfast out of his fruit.'

'No, not glad,' replied the young naturalist, as he was mounting the ladder, 'because we wanted them for our feast; but the birds must eat, you see, and they did not know it was your birthday.'

'No, indeed,' cried Harry; 'I must let them know next year, and then, perhaps, the little greedy things will be so kind as to feed in somebody else's garden, or not choose cherries for breakfast on July 12th. Mary, hold the basket; Herbert has found a good number here.'

This new grievance was detailed at the breakfast-table, and papa laughed at Harry's droll account of their loss.

'I think that may be remedied,' said mamma, 'in the winter when you are in London.'

'Oh mamma, how can that be?' said Mary.

'You know how to net, Mary, and can teach your brothers; we will get some fine twine, and proper needles, and it will be a nice useful occupation for dark days to make some large nets, and by the time the cherries are nearly ripe, you will have two ready.'

'I think you will not grudge the birds a little fruit,' said Mr. Hamilton, 'when you consider how much good they do in other respects.'

'Good?' cried Harry; 'what good do they do besides singing?'

'Eating, Harry.'

'Yes, papa,' he replied, laughing, 'eating our cherries, but that is not what I call good.'

'But cherries are not their only food, you see, Harry; they also eat caterpillars, grubs, and those little green aphides of which Mary complains so much; I suppose you have no wish to deprive the birds of those?'

'Oh no,' interrupted Harry, laughing; 'they are quite welcome to their meat dish, but they need not want so much dessert.'

'They do us so great a benefit by eating the one, my boy,' said Mr. Hamilton, 'that we must be content to let them have a little of the other; however, as they will always find plenty of trees unguarded, there is no reason why you should not defend yours with nets another year. Have you been to the summer-house this morning?'

'No, papa, we had no time.'

'Then come now, and I will go with you.'

The children were soon ready, and on entering the summer-house found, to their surprise, four large parcels on the table, properly addressed to each.

'We have given a present to all four this morning,' said papa, 'as it was the first birthday we have

kept at our new house, and because both mamma and Mr. Sinclair are pleased with their pupils.'

The parcels were soon opened, though the weight and size of two among them astonished Mary and Harry, to whom they were addressed. What joyful exclamations were raised as the papers disclosed their contents! the garden resounded with happy voices, till Harry declared they should frighten the birds.

'And as they are eating their meat course now,' he said slyly, 'that would be a pity. Oh papa, what a beautiful boat!—what a size it is!—and look, Herby, with two masts, sails, and rigging, all complete! I shall call it the Roly.'

'An awkward name for a boat,' said mamma; 'don't expect me to be a passenger, if her sailing powers agree with her name.'

'No, then it shall be the Mary and Kate,' replied the happy master of the vessel; 'and your dolls, Roly, shall go the first voyage.'

'Yes, please, Harry, and this pretty new one too,' she cried, as a beautiful waxen baby emerged from its last silver-paper covering.

'But my little Katie must promise never to go to the pond without Nurse, though Harry would be very careful, I know.'

'Yes, mamma, but may I run and call Nurse now?'

'When we have seen the contents of the other parcels, you may.'

Mary's delight may be imagined, when her cum-

brous package disclosed a pretty green and white dessert service, consisting of four dishes, two china baskets, and a dozen plates; while, to render all complete, there was for the centre of the table a flower vase to match.

‘You can keep these in a box in the tool-house, and then they will always be ready for your fruit and flowers,’ said Mrs. Hamilton.

‘Yes, dear mamma, and the dishes will be so pretty when they are filled. How quiet you are, Herby! have you opened your parcel?’

‘Oh yes, and it is books,’ said the delighted boy, ‘all about natural history. These two volumes are on birds—look at the beautiful prints—and the others are about insects. Look, there’s a picture of that great dragon-fly we saw near the pond, and here are tortoiseshell butterflies, and the pretty little blue ones. Oh! how happy I am!’ and ‘I,’ and ‘I,’ exclaimed all the children as they danced off to the pond to see the launch of the Mary and Kate—commander Harry Hamilton.

This occupied them most of the morning, for the launching of the vessel had to be performed with great ceremony; and after an early dinner they spent the remainder of the day in their garden, for the purpose of decking the summer-house gaily with flowers, of which they now had a profusion, forming pretty wreaths for the interior, and gathering a superb bouquet of the choicest kinds for the new flower vase. This was placed in the centre of the table; the

fruit dishes held the strawberries and cherries, to which Gardener added currants, both white and red ; and the tea-service filled the table quite full. The grown-up company, and Mary, who made tea, were quite sufficient to fill the summer-house, the boys and Katie being accommodated with stools on the gravel walk. How that pleasant meal in their garden was enjoyed ! they thought everything had a better flavour than usual, and, above all, the strawberries and cherries were pronounced excellent. The garden too came in for its share of admiration, for it was looking brilliant with colour ; the scarlet Geraniums were full of flower, the Verbenas covered the bed, and sent up their pretty bright heads of pink, red, and purple flowers ; while the Calceolarias and Petunias were equally promising ; but the Roses were the pride of Mary's heart, and she presented each of their guests with so splendid a specimen, that Mr. Sinclair said he had not seen finer Roses anywhere.

After tea, while they were walking about, Mr. Sinclair admired the fine Carnations, and asked Mary whether she intended to increase the roots by layers ; and when he found she did not even know what the term meant, he told her she might try the experiment, and if she succeeded it would give her much pleasure.

' Here,' he said, ' is one in a proper state for laying ; the shoot is long, and attached to the lower part of the old plant. Now, Harry, find us some very small hooked twigs, and in the mean time lend me your

sharp knife and your trowel. First, I will clear a space on the ground under the shoot, and prepare it nicely, placing some of this fine mould to receive the new plant. Now I will strip off a few of the leaves from the lower part, making the stem bare, with the exception of the two or three top leaves; then, with the sharp knife, I cut a slit half-way through one of the joints, commencing the cut just below it; I can then bend the stem to an angle, press that part into the mould, peg it down, and place the earth round it gently; the young plant which is not quite detached from the old one will shortly throw out roots at the part that has been cut, and afterwards may be entirely detached, as it will have strength to support itself. You must water the new plants when the weather is dry, but not violently, or you will wash away the soil from the tender roots; these you may remove about September, and thus fill your bed nicely, or place them in the other borders. I will tell you about piping Pinks now, and if you can spare a corner of ground somewhere you may try whether you can succeed. Prepare the ground nicely, making it fine to some depth, borrow a hand-glass from Gardener, and mark the size of it on the mould, that you may keep within its compass; then from your finest Pinks take some slips, cut off a few of the bottom leaves, and making a hole with a stick, plant them about an inch apart, pressing the earth gently round; water them well, but not so as to disturb the earth; place the hand-glass over the young plants firmly, pressing it into

the mould that no air may enter, and then the warm sun striking on the glass, and all cool air being kept from the plants, they will soon send out roots; you must admit air by degrees, and they can be moved later in the year. If you like you can raise several other kinds of plants in the same way, such as Wall-flowers, Sweetwilliams, Alyssum, scarlet *Lychnis*, or even *Roses*.

Mary was delighted with this new idea, and determined not to let the month pass by without trying the experiment in some degree, though she thought there was little room now in their garden to devote to it. Her papa told her, however, that the gardener would spare her a spot of ground in the large garden if she really wished to try. Mary procured from Gardener what she wanted, and then asked him what he meant by one of her *Carnations* being a fluke. He told her that gardeners divided *Carnations* into four kinds, flukes, bizzarres, picotees, and painted ladies. The flukes have only two colours; the bizzarres, three or more; the picotees have a white or even yellow ground, the edge jagged and spotted with scarlet, purple, or other colours, whilst in the painted ladies, the petals are coloured on the upper side, and white underneath.

The children found that the more they heard about their plants the more interested they became, for each had to be treated differently according to the soil it required, the time of flowering, the mode of increasing, whether by roots or cuttings, pipings, or seeds; so

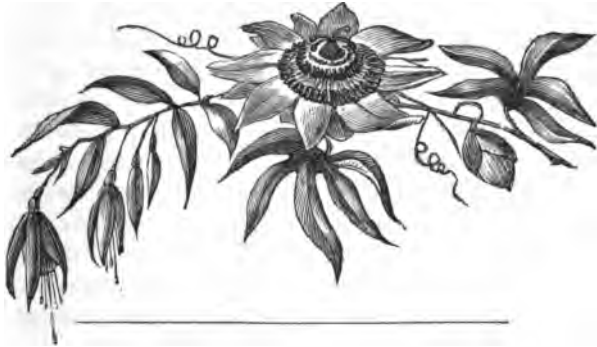
that there seemed to be always something to be learned about their favourites.

The bulbous roots were all attended to during this month and the next; the greater portion were taken up, dried, and put away till October; but the few Lilies they had were either left where they were, or if it were thought desirable to move them, they were not left long out of the ground, as they do not bear drying so well as other bulbs.

Gardener gave Mary and Herbert a lesson on the art of budding Roses, at the latter end of this month, as he was doing much of that work in the large garden; he allowed them to watch him, and bud several themselves, that when their own required it they might have the pleasure of doing it without help. He told Mary too that when she had gathered Roses from her trees, she should carefully cut away the stalks that remained after all the flowers had been gathered, removing them with a sharp knife as far as where a new shoot was showing its presence by a little bud at the bottom of a spray of leaves. The stalk left after flowering was of no more use, and took away a good portion of the sap that was rising to form the new shoot, which would thus be weakened, and either produce no flowers, or inferior ones. 'Besides,' he added, 'there is nothing so ugly as to see dead stems sticking out of the head of a standard; it gives the plant a neglected look, and not only standards look ill in this state, but all other Rose-bushes. In short, all plants should have the dead

wood and leaves or old flowering stems cut away; they do harm to the plant, and have a very untidy look.'

Mary's bouquets this month were full of beauty; she had Jessamine, Spanish Broom, Campanulas, Pinks, Carnations, Poppies of various colours, Roses, Fuchsias, Clematis, Honeysuckle, Clarkia, Sweet Peas, Nasturtium, Collinsia, Geranium, Petunia, Calceolaria, Cuphea, and Mignonette, with many others that had also been in flower last month.



CHAPTER VIII.

AUGUST.

Hot Weather, and the Watering Pots—The Pleasures of the Summer-house—Little Annie—The Cousins' Visit—New Plants for next Year—Fruit-gathering—The Boat and its Passengers—Wild and cultivated Pansies—Their Management—Plenty of Work still.

AUGUST proved a very dry, warm month; the watering-pots had to be used vigorously, and the children learned to apply the water to the roots, and in sufficient quantities, instead of sprinkling the leaves only, which, refreshing as it is to the plants, soon dries up, leaving the root as thirsty as before. The arbour, though now a good deal shaded by creepers, was too hot to sit in till late in the day, and the boys had changed their hours of home study so as to feel at leisure when the coolness of evening invited them into the garden. They were often indulged with

tea in the summer-house, or on the shady side of their garden, the table being easily carried out, when Mary's pretty fruit dishes came into use, and a vase of gay flowers always formed the centre ornament. Two or three times during the summer the children had the pleasure of bringing little Annie to see their garden; plenty of cushions in the pony-carriage had enabled her to bear the easy motion, lying on one seat, while Mary sat on the other, and careful John led the pony to within a short distance of the arbour, to which the sick child was carried, and laid tenderly on the cushions prepared for her. The sight of the children's garden, and all its beautiful many-hued flowers, was a great treat to the little invalid, who, like many delicate children, had intense enjoyment in the beauties of nature; and, for many weeks after each visit, her patient face took a brighter expression in recalling those happy evenings, as she described everything she had seen and heard to her mother.

She had drunk tea, also, with the children, and the table was never more carefully decked with fruit and flowers than when, at long intervals, poor little Annie was able to join them. Flowers were always carried to her twice or thrice a week, generally accompanied by some light nourishing food, or a little fruit; but the flowers were even more appreciated by her; and thus children who have gardens may give pleasure to others who may not, like themselves, have the power of indulging their innocent longings for something pretty to look at.

One morning, early in the month, a letter came from their aunt, who lived about twenty miles from Sunnyside, giving the pleasant news, that she would bring two of her children to spend a week or two with their cousins. The day was soon fixed; the carriage met the travellers at a station near, and a warm reception awaited the two cousins, Alfred and Isabella, who were about the same age as Mary and Herbert. As they had passed most part of their lives in the country, the children were prepared to find their cousins very learned on the subject of gardening; and after dinner, on the day of their arrival, hats were quickly put on, and the young party hastened to introduce Alfred and Belle to their domains. All was greatly admired, the arbour pronounced charming, and it was immediately settled that an early tea there would be quite indispensable.

‘How lovely these Passion-flowers are, Mary!’ said Belle, ‘and the Honeysuckle and Clematis must have been beautiful; but you should have a Forsythia.’

‘A what?’ interrupted Harry.

‘A Forsythia; we have one on our house, and it has pretty yellow blossoms very early in the year; besides, it is almost an evergreen.’

‘Yes,’ said Mary, ‘I should like that very much; but Gardener says we have quite enough for this year, and we shall see next spring whether we have room, as some plants may die; he has promised to give me a list, and then we can put in fresh things if we like.’

'You know our piece of ground will only hold a few kinds of plants,' said Herbert; 'but in papa's garden there is plenty of variety to look at, and to choose from another year.'

'Oh, yes,' said Belle, who knew a great deal about gardening, 'you might have different annuals, you know, every year, for they would most of them do in the same soil, and there are so many pretty ones.'

'Alfred, come and look at my boat,' cried Harry, 'while the girls talk about their flowers.'

The boys scampered off to the pond, where Commander Hamilton showed off the 'Mary and Kate' to the best advantage; for the boat was a favourite amusement, in spite of the fact that no passenger larger than a doll could sail in her. Meanwhile Mary and her guest prepared the harbour for company, by sweeping out dead leaves that had fallen, dusting the table and benches, and gathering flowers for the centre vase.

'But,' cried Mary, looking rather blank, 'what shall we do for fruit? we have none left, for our cherries and strawberries are all gone long ago, and our pears will not be ripe till next month, Gardener says.'

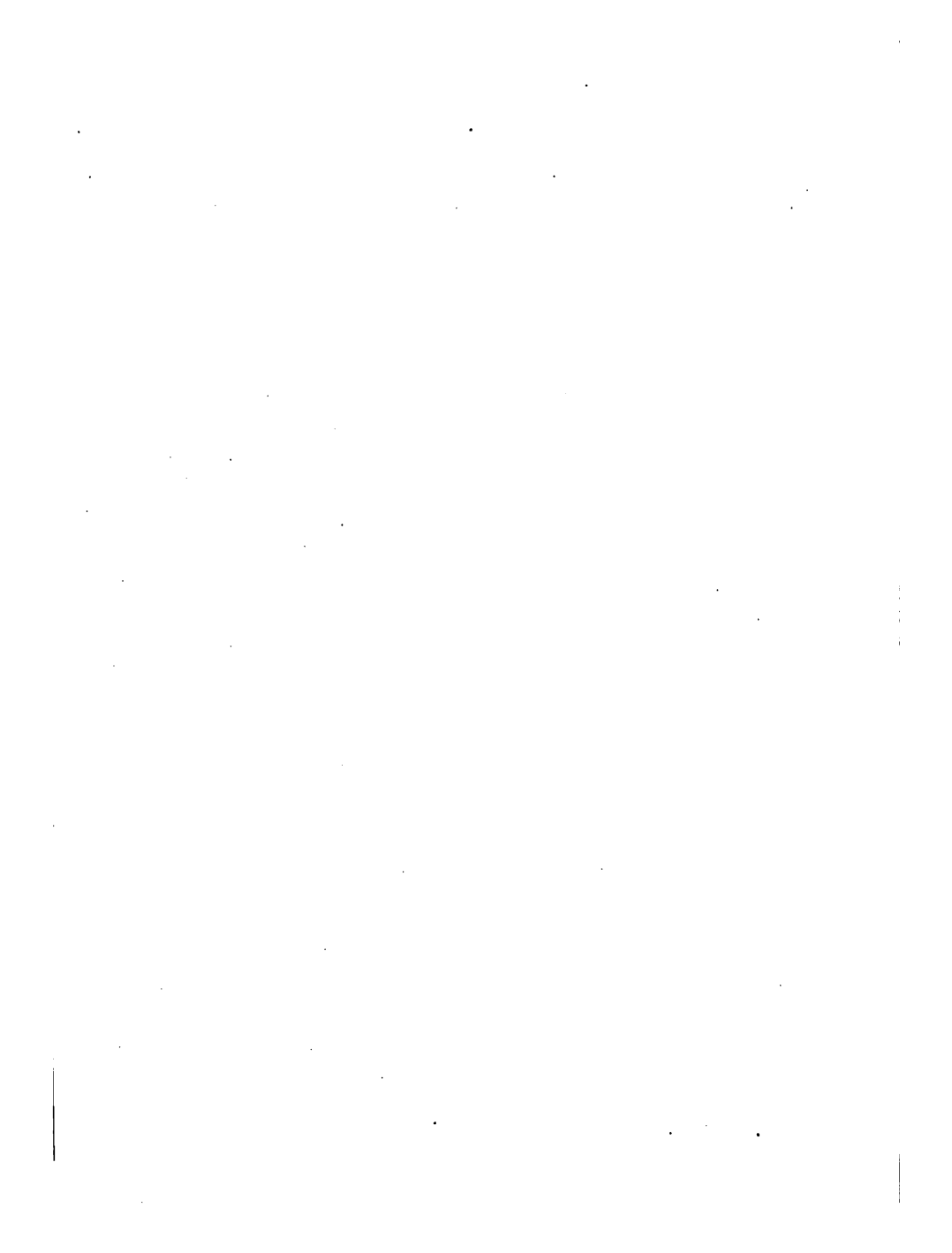
'Have you no currants?' said Belle; 'we have plenty yet.'

'Oh, yes, in the large garden, but not in our very own. I will run and ask mamma;' and soon she returned, with leave to apply to Gardener, who would tell them which bushes to gather from.



THE BOAT AND ITS PASSENGERS.

See page 102.



‘It is rather a dead time of the year, miss, for table fruit,’ he said; ‘the early sorts are going, and the late not come in; but we have still some currants, both white and red, that I netted over, for the birds eat them very fast. Here, Miss Mary, from these bushes you can pick a small dish of each, and there are raspberries, too; the birds took the few gooseberries that were left.’

‘Oh, thank you, that will do nicely,’ said Mary; and she and her cousin filled the dishes.

‘There will be plenty of wallfruit next month, young ladies,’ added Gardener; ‘peaches, nectarines, and apricots, and the plum-trees are tolerably well filled, too; it has been a rare season for most kinds of fruit and flowers, but you must not expect it to be always so.’

‘No, indeed,’ cried Belle, ‘last year we had very little fruit in our garden.’

‘Yes, you see, miss, the rain spoiled the blossom, and then the fruit did not set; and the wet encourages the slugs and snails and caterpillars, which all injure the trees and plants. Then fruit wants plenty of sun to ripen it and give flavour; we must do our best, you know, young ladies, and leave the rest to Him that sends rain and sun too;’ and Gardener reverently raised his hat as he spoke. The girls returned to the summer-house with their fruit dishes, which they had lined and covered with fresh strawberry-leaves to keep the contents cool; then Mary showed her cousin all over the grounds, and ended their walk at the pond, where they found all the elders of the party,

as well as little Katie, two of whose dolls, in large hats to save their complexions, were sailing alone in the boat with an equanimity and courage that spoke well for their nerves.

Mary and her cousin often extended their walks into the lanes and fields in quest of wild flowers, for Belle prided herself on being somewhat of a botanist, and was glad to search for them in a new locality; they frequently amused themselves by gathering bouquets of fine wild flowers, which during this month are so handsome that they vie with their more showy connexions of the garden. One day they procured a wild Pansy root, with numerous flowers on it, which Belle said was called *Viola tricolor* (or three-coloured violet), and they were much amused with the contrast to some large specimens in Mary's Pansy bed. Supposing it to be another species, they applied to Gardener, and were surprised to find it was the same, but by cultivation and care the poor-looking plant and flower had changed into the large handsome blossom they so much admired.

'If you were to neglect these, Miss Mary,' he added, 'they would again degenerate, and become as poor-looking as that you now have in your hand.'

'Then how can I prevent it?' she said, 'for I should not like to lose my handsome bed of Pansies.'

'The most important thing is to grow them in proper soil—a good rich loam; then, as the blooms on the older and larger plants are always smaller and less well marked, though in greater numbers, we take

off the side shoots when they are about two inches long, and, putting them into the ground about half their length, shelter them from the sun with a hand-glass, or we put them into a shady place, giving plenty of water; when they have rooted, which is in a very short time, the young plants may be moved into the place where they are to flower, and will soon grow into good plants. Those you strike in August and September will make good plants for flowering early in May and June, and in spring new ones may be struck which will flower in autumn, so that there will be a constant succession. You may, therefore, both this and next month, try the plan; you can have a small bed of them by the side of the pinks and other things you planted last month in the kitchen garden; but, Miss Mary, if you wish for very fine flowers, you must sacrifice a few of the buds on these plants, by pinching some of them off, and those left will produce finer blooms; if you let them all expand, the plants gradually produce smaller and poorer flowers, and at last become almost like the wild kind.'

'Look at these, Gardener; are they not beautiful?' said Mary.

'Yes, you have some fine roots here; the blossoms, you see, are nearly circular, flat, very smooth and even at the edge, which is one good characteristic, the petals are velvety, and the colours pure, not running into one another; you must try and preserve these characters by taking new plants from the best,

and treating them as I have described. Another year we must have some China Asters, as they are very showy this month and next, and with Dahlias, Chrysanthemums, and a few other plants, last till quite late in the season. This is the month when Box edgings may be cut, but yours were so recently planted, that this year it will not be required.'

'I am afraid there is not much more to be done,' said Mary.

'Oh, yes, miss, even now, but more particularly next month, you will have to gather and dry all the seeds of the annuals you wish to save; and there is still employment enough in keeping all neat and free from dead stalks and leaves, which will begin to accumulate very fast in another week or two.'



CHAPTER IX.

SEPTEMBER.

Anticipations of Winter—London young Ladies and Gentlemen—The Rose and its Inhabitant—Earwigs, and the Way to catch them—The Dahlia, and its Perfections—A Discussion on Colour—Arrangement of Dahlias for the Drawing-room—Pipings and Layers transplanted—Varieties of Violets—Bulbs for early Spring Flowering—The Garden still gay.

IT begins to feel quite cold in the garden before breakfast, mamma,' said Herbert, as the boys ran into the room one fine morning early in September, their cheeks glowing with the slightly frosty air.

'Yes, we shall soon begin to think of winter again, Herby,' replied Mrs. Hamilton, 'though October is often one of our finest months in England, and even during the first half of November there are bright

sunny days in the country, a great contrast to the foggy days in town.'

'And then,' said Harry, in rather a mournful tone, 'gardening will be over for this year, and instead of scampering about the grounds, we shall have to walk properly in the streets, looking like London young ladies and gentlemen. Come, Roly, I'll show you how you will be obliged to behave in Grosvenor Square; heads up, shoulders down, quick march! no, slow march, I mean, it is more proper for London; don't laugh, that is against rules;' and the two walked up and down the breakfast-room, turning out their toes, and looking very solemn, till they could hold out no longer for laughing, and Herbert reminded Harry that it was Annie's morning, and breakfast was ready.

'What lovely flowers you have gathered for her to-day!' said Harry; 'what a delicious rose!' and he buried his nose in the rich crimson *Géant des batailles*, but withdrew it so speedily that Herbert asked if the giant had bitten him.

'No,' replied he, 'but I felt something tickle my nose; look, it's an earwig! catch it, Roly, it's under your plate; there it goes!' But Katie's fingers were hidden under the table as the little runaway came near, and Herbert was obliged to come to the rescue, and restore the frightened insect to the garden.

'You were not afraid of the earwig, were you, Katie?' asked papa.

'No, not frightened, but I don't like to touch them, papa,' said the little girl.

‘Nor do I,’ cried Harry; ‘I know they don’t hurt me or get into my ears, though I used to think so till you told me about them, mamma, but there’s a creepy crawly sort of feeling about them,’ he added, pretending to shiver, ‘which may be very pleasant to Herby who loves all insects, great and small, but, for my part, I should prefer them not coming on my nose when I am smelling the Roses, or on the cloth when I am eating my breakfast.’

‘I saw this morning,’ said Mary, ‘that Gardener had put small flower-pots on the top of each of the Dahlia sticks, and he told me that they were to catch the earwigs. Have you noticed our two Dahlias, mamma? one is a beautiful lemon colour, and the other scarlet, and the flowers are almost as round as a ball.’

‘Yes, dear, they are very fine ones; that roundness is considered a great perfection, and also the petals being quilled, or half rolled up, as yours are.’

‘In your garden, mamma, there are Dahlias of all the colours of the rainbow,’ exclaimed Harry, ‘almost, I mean.’

‘It is well you added almost,’ said papa, ‘or I should have sent you to fetch me a blue one; there are all shades of red, both crimson and scarlet, and of yellow from lemon to orange, and a great variety of purple, but no decided blue. It has been said that no kind of flower can have specimens of the three primitive colours, blue, red, and yellow, and I certainly know of no instance; do you, mamma?’

‘No, I think not, but we will ask Gardener about it. Suppose, children, after dinner you bring a specimen of all the varieties of Dahlia, and see what is the nearest approach to blue, and then Mary shall arrange them for the drawing-room.’

Harry now jumped up, and taking Annie’s bouquet, with two fine peaches in a little basket, and Herbert following with their books, the two boys disappeared down the avenue.

After dinner all four went into the garden to fulfil mamma’s commission, and they were quite surprised at the great variety they found, but no blue Dahlias were to be seen; they amused themselves with examining other flowers too, and with the same result, finding, as mamma had said, none producing the three primitive colours. Mary then arranged the Dahlias in flat dishes, cutting the stems short.

‘Try some with wet sand, Mary, instead of water; the flowers will stand more firmly, and I believe they last longer,’ said Mrs. Hamilton. ‘And do not put too many of one shade together; purple and yellow look very well, or red and white.’

One fine afternoon after the cousins had returned home, the three elder children were set to work by Gardener to transplant the pipings of Pinks that Mary had made, and of which a considerable number had taken root; they had been gradually hardened by lifting the glass only in the daytime at first, until they could bear the air and cool nights. The children first prepared the bed, under Gardener’s

instructions, by adding some good soil, which he had mixed with decayed stable litter, and then taking up the new plants with a trowel, carefully placed them in the bed so prepared. The layers of Carnations were also attended to, and such as had rooted were separated from the old plant, and put into the ground in the same way. The children were surprised to find that a few of their Violet roots were in flower, emitting a pleasant delicate scent, and on inquiry were told that they were not the common kinds, but the Neapolitan and Russian varieties, which bloom much later than the others, and on that account were very valuable in the autumn.

Gardener told them that at the end of this month bulbs were often planted for early spring flowering, but he thought as they would be in London then, perhaps it would be better to defer till October and November; as in that case they would have the pleasure of seeing them when they came back to the country in the spring. The afternoons were pretty well employed now in keeping all clean and neat, gathering flowers, and attending to those plants that required moving. The garden was still gay with Roses, Phlox, Hollyhocks, Snapdragon, Stocks, Lobelia, Geranium, Calceolaria, purple Groundsel, and several other handsome plants; and Mary had still the pleasure of gathering one or two Passion-flowers during the early part of the month, and she considered this creeper the chief ornament of the summer-house.



CHAPTER X.

OCTOBER.

Replanting Bulbs, and Addition of many new ones—Saving Seed—
Decayed Annuals cleared away—Weeding.

AT the beginning of this month Mary began to think of replanting some of the bulbs for next spring, as she was anxious to have a succession of the bright flowers to greet them on their return to the country. On opening the bags which had been hung during the summer in the tool-house, she found the bulbs looking dry and healthy, and consulted Gardener as to the best method of putting them into the ground. The first thing, he told her, was to consider where they would look well, and be most out of the way of summer plants.

‘It is a good thing,’ he said, ‘to place them where the bedding-out plants and late-sown annuals will

afterwards be, as then they are out of the way before the ground is wanted for those that are to follow.'

The corners of the four large geometric beds were again selected for early Tulips, Narcissus, Jonquil, Hyacinth, Crocus, and Snowdrop, and other groups were placed between the herbaceous plants in the borders. Gardener provided Mary with some rich light mould, sand, and decayed leaves; he then showed her, when the spot was prepared, how to make holes with a dibble, four or five inches deep, for Hyacinths and Tulips, and rather less for Crocuses and Snowdrops; the latter he placed pretty closely together in a patch, and the former in small groups of four or six. He told her that if the bulbs are grown under a south wall where it is dry and hot, they may be left in the ground all the year, and then they increase, and form fine patches; but in other situations they are better taken up every season. The little garden was supplied with some new bulbs, such as the Star of Bethlehem, common and grape Hyacinths, the Fritillaria, some white, orange, and Turk's-cap Lilies, a few Iris roots, Cyclamen, Ranunculus, and Christmas Rose; Mary begged also for a few *Gentiana acaulis* roots, as the deep blue colour of their flowers contrasted so well with others; and as they do not like to be moved often, they were planted where they might remain, at the corners of a bed, and some peat earth was provided for them.

'All these plants,' said Gardener, 'flower early, and are therefore very valuable. The Anemones must

be attended to, Miss Mary, as they ought to be in the ground before frosts set in; they are planted about two inches deep in sandy loam, and if a severe frost comes, I will cover them for you with a little litter, or a mat, and take it off when the weather is milder, for anemones are rather delicate, and their sap is apt to be affected by the frost.'

They then determined to plant the rest of the bulbs in November, to make a succession; and wherever they were placed, neat sticks with names were added to mark the spot. Mary found some employment in saving the seeds of her favourite plants, which she gathered on a dry day, laid in the sun in the arbour, and then, freeing the seed from leaves and stalks, she put them in little paper bags; those that were in pods Gardener advised her not to take out, as they keep better for being left in them till wanted next year. The decayed annuals were now all cleared away, and the beds made neat and free from weeds, Herbert and Mary attending also to the borders, not allowing a weed to appear, nor a dead leaf or stalk to remain.





CHAPTER XI.

NOVEMBER.

First sharp Frost, and its Effects—Death of the Geraniums and Dahlias—Propagation of Bedding-out Plants—Use of the Frame explained—Plenty to do even in Winter—Clearing away dead Leaves—Food provided for Plants—Autumn Nosegay.

THE beginning of November brought the first sharp frost, and on going into the garden one morning, Mary was quite distressed to find her beautiful Dahlias and Geraniums turned quite black; the former hanging helplessly from their supporting sticks, the latter lying on the ground, with evidently no intention of ever raising their heads again. Meeting Gardener, she told her trouble, and asked him how the young plants were obtained for next year, if those in the large garden had fared as badly as her own.

‘They are all alike, Miss Mary; but please to come with me, and I will show you how we provide for another year. The Dahlia roots, I think you know, are taken up, dried, and planted again in early summer; and as for Geraniums, look here, miss,’ and Gardener raised the glass of a frame and showed her many hundreds of small plants. ‘You see there will be no want of young plants; most of these will live through the winter with care, and those other two frames are also quite full.’

‘Are these all Geraniums?’ asked Mary.

‘No, miss, there are also slips of all the bedding-out plants; these were taken in July and August, and they will remain here till next June, the frame being opened, or covered with mats, according to the weather. I did not show you about these slips this year, for your papa thought you had quite enough to learn without, but I will tell you how it is done, and next summer you will be able to manage for yourselves.’

‘Thank you, Gardener, but what becomes of all the old plants?’

‘Most of them are thrown away, miss, but some few are taken in, repotted, and kept in the greenhouse, and those make the fine plants that stand at the front door.’

‘Then why can they not all be saved?’ said Mary, who did not approve of her favourites being suffered to die, when they might be kept alive.

‘Why, Miss Mary, in the first place, there would

not be room for them, either in the greenhouse or pits; then they would grow very straggling and untidy-looking, and not flower so well; another thing is that they would have to be taken in early, instead of being left to look gay till the frosts come. In July I take a great number of slips from side shoots of the healthy plants, cutting them clean through near a joint, and I take all the leaves off excepting a few at the top. I put these slips into rather small pots, you see, miss, about five inches across at the top, having placed at the bottom of each, broken bits of pot for drainage, and then filled them with good loamy soil; several plants may be put into each pot near the edge, the earth pressed down, and gently watered. When the moisture has evaporated, the pots are placed in the frames prepared for them, and shaded from sun and light, till they begin to root, when light and air are admitted; in severe frosts we cover the frames with matting or straw.'

'I see,' said Mary, 'there is a great deal to attend to even in winter; but, Gardener, what is all that at the bottom of the frames for the pots to stand in?'

'I forgot to tell you, miss, that the pits are prepared by placing manure at the bottom, which gives out a certain degree of heat; this is covered with ashes to keep out the worms, and upon this we put a layer of sawdust, into which the pots are plunged.'

'Thank you, Gardener; I understand now all about

it, and shall fancy the plants warm and comfortable for the winter.'

Mary was now quite satisfied, and looked on contentedly with her brothers after dinner, whilst one of the under-gardeners cleared away all her cherished favourites that had been touched by the frost; and they all helped to dig up and rake the borders afterwards, though Mary said it was almost useless, as the leaves from the fruit and other trees littered them again directly.

'Yes, but it is better to get rid of some, Mary,' said her mamma, who was looking on, 'than to have the accumulation of days lying on your walks; it is not only untidy at the time, but spoils the gravel.'

'What is done with all the leaves, Gardener? are they thrown away?'

'They are too valuable to throw away, miss,' he replied; 'they make one of the best kinds of manure for flower-beds.'

'Then why not leave them on the beds, and save all the raking?' said Harry, thinking this a bright idea.

'Because, sir, it is better to place them in a heap, where they become more thoroughly decayed, and decomposed, and will make fine manure next year. All the leaves in the large garden will be placed in heaps, and we turn them over occasionally, mixing stable litter, lime, and other things with them. We consider manure a most valuable thing; indeed, our gardens would be very poor without it, the flowers would degenerate, and perhaps die for want of good

food, and decayed leaves are amongst the things they like best. Plants take up their food from the soil by their roots, which have little mouths at the end of each fibre; this nourishment is sent from one part of the plant or tree to another, even into the leaves and flowers; so you see, Master Harry, like you they would die if we did not give them food enough, and of a good kind too. Some of them are very eager for this nourishment, spreading their roots far and wide in search of it, and when they hang down their heads, they are asking for food and water, as plainly as you can do, sir, only in a different language.'

'So plants speak as well as eat and drink,' cried Harry; 'wonders will never cease! I have no doubt the plants of other countries speak differently to ours,' he added, laughing; 'in France they speak French, and so on.'

'Well, sir, I do not think that is the case,' said Gardener, joining in the general laugh; 'but perhaps Miss Mary may find it out, if she is very attentive.'

Mary's bouquets during the latter part of this month were formed of sprays of Laurestine, Arbutus, and Chrysanthemum, and she had also the autumnal Crocus.



CHAPTER XII.

DECEMBER.

The Garden put into Winter Order—Care of Tools and other Implements—Anticipations of Town—Winter Studies arranged—Annie's Wants provided for—The Boys' Presents—Farewell Visits—Adieu to the Garden, Gardener, and the Pets—Driving off—Gardener's last Words.

THE children had found little to do in their garden after the middle of November, and the damp, gloomy weather, alternating with frosts, had made a good run with their hoops in the avenue preferable to standing about in their now sombre-looking, though neat domain. The leaves had all fallen, and been swept up to add to Gardener's heap; the flowers

were all gone, the Fuchsias, Anemones, and other delicate things protected from frosts by litter or ashes. The tools, after being well cleaned, were hung up in the tool-house, as well as the brooms and garden baskets, the wheelbarrow and roller were housed, and Mary's *plate chest*, as Harry called it, with the pretty dessert service, was removed to the pantry. The table and benches in the summer-house were carefully put away too, that they might not be injured by the rain beating in upon them, and, in short, everything having been put into winter order, the children were not so sorry as they had expected to be, on hearing that they were to go to town early in December, for two months at least.

'But, papa,' said Herbert, 'what are we to do about lessons all that time?'

'Well, Herbert, Mr. Sinclair has promised to give you enough to occupy you a short time each day; and should we stay in town beyond January, Mr. Gordon has kindly invited you to come to the Rectory for a short time, and continue your lessons till we join you.'

'Oh, yes, that would be pleasant,' cried Harry, 'if it were only for a week; but I should not much like it for long, though I do love Mr. Sinclair very much indeed, and am not afraid of Mr. Gordon's spectacles now; what a goose I must have been to think he ever looked cross!'

'If Mr. Sinclair can be spared, he has promised to come and see us about Christmas time,' said Mrs.

Hamilton, 'so you will hear whether your garden is safe, and have news of all your village friends.'

'We shall be so glad to hear of dear little Annie, mamma,' said Mary; 'I am so sorry to leave her.'

'She will miss you very much, I am sure, but Mrs. Gordon has promised to supply your place in providing her with all she wants in the way of nourishing food; and now she can read so nicely to herself, you can select some of your story-books to leave with her, and she will then not be without amusement. Are the warm clothes you have been making for her nearly finished?'

'Yes, mamma, very nearly; and I made almost all the little flannel-gown myself,' said Katie, putting up her rosy mouth for the kiss she thought her diligence deserved. The boys, too, had each a little present for the sick child, whose patience and thankfulness had won all their hearts. Harry, who had become an expert carpenter, had made, under Mr. Shaving's directions, a small box to hold the needlework or knitting, which occupied her fingers when she was not suffering too much for any employment; and Herbert had saved his pocket-money to buy her some simple games that would amuse her when alone.

At last the day arrived for the removal to town; Mr. Sinclair came to breakfast, after which the children ran down to the village to shake hands with the many friends they had made there during their stay. Little Annie was the last, and some tears were shed on both sides, as the girls kissed her pale cheeks, and

said two months would soon pass, when they should see her again, and bring her the first bunch of Snow-drops and Crocuses from their garden. Even Harry looked very grave, as he shook hands with the little girl, and Herbert, trying to smile and speak cheerfully, was obliged to say that they should be too late, and run hastily from the cottage. Then the dear white pony was stroked and kissed, the dogs all patted, and with a farewell run to the garden, and a final adieu to Gardener, who had so kindly helped and taught them, the carriage came to the door, and they set off.

Gardener's last words were, 'I will take every care of your garden, Miss Mary, and, young gentlemen, I hope you will have a merry Christmas, and that the New Year will bring you back to us in good health; good morning, sir.'

'They are as kind a master and mistress,' said Gardener to one of his men, after closing the gates behind the carriage, 'as ever a servant had; and the children are growing up just like their parents. God bless them all, I say, and bring them safe back to Sunnyside!'

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